The Upper Room Congregation's Handbook

This Handbook is a footnote on the vision of John Wycliffe

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65 million professing believers in America today have walked away from the organized Church, not Christ. They have decided that the organized Church has divorced what it does or teaches from anything Jesus did or taught.

Authoritarian Religion since Genesis 3:16 has served its purpose. It's gone as far as it can go. God's word requires more, not less.

Wycliffe, the English Bible Translator in 1384, was speaking of you when he said, "With God's word in the serf's heart and His Holy Spirit, we will finally be able to become a Government of the People, By the People and For the People." You are the child of those serfs who were transformed over the next 500 years into the beginnings of the self-government God's Word and Spirit make possible. You will continue their growth in God's Word. --- JLF

The Anarchist is popularly defined as one who opposes any authority outside of himself because he opposes God's law and word.

Biblical self-control is not anarchy. When God's law is written on your heart you fear no magistrate. You need no magistrate, priest or outside authority, because your life proves God's law is written on your heart. When you submit to one another or to those who lead whether magistrate, elder, or husband it is voluntarily as unto Christ for the Love of the Fellowship of God's people constrains you.

The Egalitarian is one who believes that fair and equal treatment can only come if everyone is the same, or equal and distinctions are ignored.

Biblical self-control is not egalitarian. Mature Ephesians 4 Christians are as different as parts of a body and gifts are different. Their equality does not lie in a false, enforced equivalence, but rather in their unmediated submission to God's Law and Cross, God's justice and mercy.

Biblical authority does not grant the power to force one's will over another. Instead, it grants the authority of integrity and example in leaders that cause followers to willingly submit to them, as unto Christ.

The salvation taught in the New Testament, is described as the new birth of a new creature and the death of the old creature; as sitting with Christ in the heavenlies; as being filled with the Spirit; as being transformed so as to bear the weight of glory; as being given a new heart of flesh replacing the heart of stone; as needing no one to teach you to know the Lord; as to knowing the mind of Christ; as needing no one in the office of Rabbi, Teacher, Father, Priest; You are God's royal priesthood in the earth. The lowliest person in Christ is fit by God's Word to judge the loftiest ruler.

You can find leaders, their gifting, and their authority everywhere in the New Testament. What you cannot find is an institutional structure, or official titles that grant leaders power over others beyond that granted them by those who submit to them on any given issue at any given time.

There is one mark of the successful leader in Christ: dying. Leading from a cross only those willing to follow, not leading because the leader is empowered to force anyone to do anything. The only leadership gift, really, is dying.

"If any man would be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me, he who finds his life will lose it, he who loses his life will find it."

The following pages are not anti-organization, instead they ask what the rules and structure of an organization would look like if for the first time since Genesis 3:16, it did not grant its leaders the power to control the followers, but rather empowered leaders to take heed to themselves and to their teaching, and transform all those whom they touch by their way of life. Like Jesus: they rule by word, truth, integrity not the power to coerce.

Simply organizing with no "official" leader is not Biblical government. The house church can by as Tyrannical as the Vatican. This book is about the heart of Biblical Organizing, from groups of 2 to the whole earth as Jesus, Paul, Peter and John taught. It is not obvious until you see it. There is no shortcut from Gen 3:16 to [Mt 19-Lk22-Heb 8-I Pt 5:3-Eph 4.]

PART ONE:
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL ORDER

I. JESUS CHRIST KING AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH

A. Government rests upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ, whose name is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;

1. of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end;
2. He is the 2nd Adam who reestablishes the plan and government He ordained in Creation.
3. He sits upon the throne of David to order and establish His kingdom with judgment and justice from henceforth, even forever.[1]

B. God the Father gave all power to Him in heaven and in earth:[2]

1. Raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand;[3]
2. Raised Him far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;[4]
3. Is making all things His footstool;[5]
4. Gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all;[6]
5. And in Him holds all things together in creation.[7]

C. He ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things,

1. He received gifts for His Bride the Church, and[8]
2. He gave them hearts of flesh taking away their hearts of stone.[9]
3. To His New Creation, He gave all gifts and callings necessary to build up His Church and fill the earth;[10]
4. And with the Father, sent the Holy Spirit for the perfecting of His saints making them sufficient for all things to be self-directed from

[1] Isaiah 9:6-7; Ephesians 2:6-7 all Christians not just leaders are seated with him.
[2] Matthew 28:18.
[3] Daniel 7:13; Acts 1.
[4] Ephesians 1.
[5] Isaiah 8:7; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14; 26-27; Psalm 110.
[6] Daniel 7:13-14 & 7:26-27; Eph 1:20-23.
[7] Hebrews 1:1-4; Colossians 1:17.
[8] Ephesians 4.
[9] Jeremiah 31; Hebrews 8; Matthew 19:8; Luke 24:25.
[10] Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4; I Corinthians 13-14.

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the heart, fearing no wind of doctrine that might blow them about.[11]

5. He wrote His law on their heart as He himself the 2nd Adam is the Law and Word of God made flesh, the pattern for His new people. Adam was to have God's Law-word written on his heart but failed and with him all of humanity until God came to change what Adam and Eve had done at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.[12]

D. Jesus, is The Mediator, the Atonement, The Priest, The Prophet, The King, The Savior, and The Head of the Church, and therefore —

1. Contains in Himself, by way of eminency, all the gifts in His Church.
2. He is Apostle, Teacher, Pastor, Minister, Bishop, Prophet and the only Lawgiver in Zion.
3. It belongs to His Majesty from His throne of glory to rule and teach the Church through His Word and Spirit by the ministry and gifting of every saint — which is utterly different from an organizational office which empowers a leadership-elite to bind God's helpless people who cannot act apart from submitting to their judgments.[13]
4. He leads and empowers the victorious war of the Church against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms,[14] through which struggle, the flesh and blood of the space-time history of the earth is transformed according to His plan laid from the foundation of the world.[15]
5. Therefore, Christ grants His own authority to His people to declare, judge and execute the whole counsel of God in the midst of the congregation.[16] The exercise of this power is not in the private control of a special group of leaders[17] who exercise power on behalf; in place of; or in authority over the congregation.[18]
6. When the Lord and King of the Church says that the exercise of organizational authority over one another "is not to be so among you."[19] He explicitly rejects the authoritarian way the gentiles have always structured the authority and power of all their governing whether raw power or the manipulation of gifts. Since the Fall they have governed by a select few of their great ones to rule over them. The Church, with the brief exception of the first generation, has

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[11] John 1; 14:12-18; 16:5-15; Eph 4:10-13.

[12] Romans 5:12-21

[13] Daniel 7:18&27; Matthew 18:15-22; Ephesians 4.

[14] Ephesians 4:11; 6:12.

[15] Ephesians 2:8-10.

[16] Matthew 18:15-18 & 28:18-20; Psalm 22:22; 35:18; Hebrews 2:12; Acts 15;

[17] Acts 8:20.

[18] I Timothy 2:12.

[19] Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25; I Peter 5:1-3.

followed the world conveying the power of the Church from the congregation to an elite few to have earthly authority over them.[20]

7. In place of the elite few priests, the Lord and King of the Church establishes self-government, which is His plan from the beginning to be so. Throughout this handbook self-government is the government of Spiritually mature adults, full of the Holy Spirit, self-governed according to the Law of God written on their recreated hearts of flesh which is the plan of God in Creation and has been reestablished in the incarnation, atonement and recreating work of Christ, in His ascension to the right hand of God, and in His rule in the earth through giving His Spirit at Pentecost."[21]

E. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that the Lord of every aspect of creation from its raw existence to the infinite things which can be done to multiply its fruitful possibility has spoken His Word to guide this great Genesis 1 plan of dominion. Through His incarnation, atoning and recreating death, resurrection, ruling ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit, He has transformed, filled, equipped and enabled His people to bring to full fruit every aspect of earth and society throughout history. Sin and its attending will not prevent the completion of His plans nor will it define his people.

F. It is important to state, I. E again, both theologically and in simple English: Jesus, fully God, became fully Human. He sacrificially took on the guilt of His people dying in their place to make them clean. He was raised from the dead and in power, transforms each one of his saints, making a new creature with a new heart; adopting them into his family; restoring His image-purpose in them. He bodily ascended into heaven where He stands at the right hand of power ruling and guiding his people through the Holy Spirit whom He has poured out on them to lead guide and write His law on their new hearts calling them new creatures capable of bearing the weight of His Glory. This is the reality of the Christian Church, Christ's Bride, needing no human organization of Elite Officers to guide, teach or discipline them as if this elite had unique powers from God reserved only for their leadership as it was under the curse. Jesus Christ needs no priest to minister to His people — there is no man to call "Father" or "Rabbi." No mediator. They shall need "none to teach them to know the Lord." — in name or function[22] to represent His Bride to Him, nor to represent Him to His Bride nor to administer any form of discipline or blessing. There is no human authority or power or organization needed to attend the Lord of the Universe or His Bride on their honeymoon —which is the picture we have of the work in the world left to be done. Our task is not to forget our first love.

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[20] Judges 9.

[21] Jeremiah 20:32-40.

[22] Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11; Matthew 23:8-12

1. By contrast, "Gospel," today has become limited to,

a. The least one must to know to be saved.

b. The least one can do to remain saved.

c. "Holiness," is now defined by how we protect ourselves from infection from the surrounding culture rather than how to infect it with Grace, Life and Health.

d. Cultural impact is reduced to things we can incorporate from the surrounding culture and still be "saved."

e. Application of the Gospel to all creation is condemned as the new legalism. All philosophies of history, dispensational, premillennial, Amillennial and Post Millennial have devised ways unique to their particular perspective on history to understand history so that there is little to nothing they can do to apply God's word today in a way that makes a difference.

2. The most common Christ and Culture metaphors are a diet, a sinking ship and a threat. Salvation is the question: "What is the least we can eat to live?" And "How much of the ship can I take with me and still float in the life boat or life vest? Or, how many rules should I create to keep the world as far from me as possible." Or "Why polish brass on a sinking ship."

a. Instead Scripture tells us "The ship is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" "Come taste and See that the Lord is Good." "Behold I send you out as sheep among wolves, . . . heal the sick, raise the dead, feed my lambs."[23] His purpose for us is not only to transform the culture on the ship, but to transform the ship itself into a glorious reality that would be unrecognizable to people who think of boats as we think of them today ***and you, where you are right now, have a real part in that work of transforming the earth***.[24]

b. The Gospel is the good news that you are transformed as the first fruits of God's plan to transform every square inch of the planet, socially and technologically through your ministry as part of the ministry Jesus Christ through time. The Church is the seedbed of His plan, that seed is planted in your heart and grows throughout the actions of your life and the world is transformed and dwells in your branches.[25]

c. A word to those who build monuments to the prophets of AD 200-400, AD 1000-1300, or AD 1500-1700: [26] If what you preach with all of its sophistication and claim to "know God's word and apply it to all things," does not preach the victory of the Gospel in the space-

[23] Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11; Matthew 23:8-12; Psalm 24:1-3; I Corinthians 10:26; Matthew 10:8,16,24,26; 28:17-20; John 21:15.

[24] Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 8; Ephesians 2:10.

[25] Genesis 3:15; Ephesians 2:9-10; Luke 17:21; Matthew 13:31-32.

[26] Orthodoxy; High Middle Ages; Reformation: high points of Christian understanding and impact on our world.

time history which began in Genesis 1-4, then you are leaches on the bride of Christ, and a dead weight; one more curiosity caged in the secular zoo our society has become through your ministry which robbed the Gospel of its relevance to the space-time reality we live.

d. The Biblical understanding of history provides you with meaningful work for you to do. Your purpose is to evaluate your circumstances make the decisions and do the things which keep you faithful in every moment and action of your life. If you find that you can never take action because Jesus has not returned, or because of some theological subtlety such as the "not yet" superseding the "already" or because any decision would be the lesser of two evils (three afflictions unique to three different understandings of history) concluding it would be better to do nothing, then you have not grasped the Biblical understanding of who Christ is, who you are, and what history is. You know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. The only begotten son of God was given for one Reason: "For God so loved the world"

G. Some terms as used throughout the rest of this Handbook

1. **Gospel** — The Good News that God came as fully Human and Fully God and died in our place paying the price for our sin and in that same death recreating us in his image, the true image of the Original Creation and has given us a new life and renews his original creation plan to transform the earth in space time history. This is the glorious hope of all creation, the rich banquet of the Word of God made flesh, the living tablet which would never shatter like the hard stone Moses carried down from the mountain. This banquet is served for you, and is never the starvation diet on a sinking boat prevalent in evangelical circles, or the heady high, rich tasty yet empty calorie diet of the epicureans prevalent in reformed and episcopal circles. The Government of Christ explained here is the government which in time will transform all the ways anything is done in the earth: a government that you can in all things work to establish God's Kingdom without fear of compromise or failure. You walk in the good works you were recreated to walk in today, not in some other age, or far distant future. There is no future that is not established by what Christ does to and through you each day.

2. **Church** — Has two technical meanings "universal" or "congregation" which context should make clear but at other times it helps to use the specific references.

a. **Church**: ***meaning either Universal (all believers through all time) or Militant (All believers alive at any one time however organized or independent) or Triumphant, (All believers who have died).*** These are all who identify as Christian or are part of groups that identify as Christian. They believe that the man Jesus is fully God and died to both save them for eternity and make them relevant to today's issues. To be Christian in this sense, requires no specific identification, association, covenanting, joining etc. with any

organized group, nor does anything we do guarantee eternal salvation which is beyond the scope, or power, or any guarantee found in any group membership or independence. There is no government structure for this meaning of "Church." Such a structure to intrude here would by definition be a mediator competing with Jesus Christ the only mediator between God and Man.

b. **Church — *meaning, Congregation, fellowship, denomination, local church, the body, etc***. These indicate the organizational bodies of Christians bounded by Scripture who gather and govern their association with different rules of order, procedures for discipline, theological nuances and doctrines, ethical and social practices and liturgical expressions. Membership in such a group does not validate one's faith or word. If it did then salvation would not be by grace through faith alone but would be Grace through faith, validated by the priestly councils of men. The command of Scripture is "Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."[27] This is not a specific command to enter into a particular sort of binding fellowship, rather it is the general command consistent with God's original concern for Adam, "It is not Good for Man to dwell alone." We were designed for fellowship, organization and common action led by leaders. Any further association, covenanting, or joining any sworn submission to an elder, which a group may agree to, is to be helpful based on an individual's judgment as priest of the most High God, that those who lead, lead in truth and grace according to God's word, it is not mandatory for one's salvation or growth in grace.

3. **Leaders**: There are many different names in the various organizations we call "Churches" for the people who lead them. Priests, Popes, Fathers, Elders, Bishops, Deacons, Shepherds, Overseers, Primates, Cardinals, "arch-" and "under-" versions of the preceding, etc. In one way or another, historically ***all*** Christian groups empower their leaders with a level of authority that the member does not possess but *must* submit to. This handbook does not deny the validity and necessity of submission[28] and uses the term "Leaders," not to be disrespectful of the nuances found in the particular terms used historically, but to keep the discussion focused on the character, authority and powers of those who lead, and avoid bogging down in the details of leadership found in any particular organization. In respect to Government, since Genesis 3:16, governments have all been alike. Specifically,

a. There is a leader, or an organization of leaders, separated out from the congregation/followers.

b. These leader(s) are granted authority (legitimate use of coercive

[27] Hebrews 10:25.

[28] Ephesians 5-6.

force) which the members of the congregation do not have, called specifically an "office.".

c. They claim their Authority involves the power to control all or some of the following:

(1) The worship.

(2) The doctrine and teaching.

(3) The performance of the sacraments.

(4) The partaking of the sacraments.

(5) Who speaks and when.

(6) Examining and disciplining members of the congregation.

d. Discipleship in the Church for the last 2,000 years has always been defined in terms of these controlling powers of the leaders. To suggest leadership is possible without the power to control is heard by most to be nonsense, an oxymoron. Many will publicly ridicule those who deny that the power to control is necessary in order to have the power to lead because they hear nonsense and a reasonable response to nonsense is laughter. We invite you to think through the issues to see if in fact this is precisely the distinction we find throughout Scripture when it tells us what human government should be like, with the one exception being Genesis 3:16, the curse on the unregenerate attempt to organize and govern through the power to control being given to the one who leads. Even the Law of Moses prescribes no executive powers to the government ordained there other than the voluntary obedience of the people to their judges. (Moses grants no power to draft for war; no power to tax; Only the people are empowered to execute the judge's judgment.)[29]

H. The rest of this document begins with Jesus' statement in the Upper Room: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you." And with that firm word, walks through the Scriptures to show how the plan of God from creation is to present Jesus Christ with a people who follow him, not out of constraint or compulsion of the flesh or of organizational discipline, but governed by His Spirit and Law on their heart motivated by love of God and love of each other to voluntary unity with each other in any variety of organizations and efforts as each is moved to undertake or join (or not) as the river of living water flows out of them to water the earth. This is true Biblical Power. The Church has been held captive by the Babylonian ideal of the need for its leaders to possess a form of power, and office to define and empower them with the force necessary to establish, police and insure conformity to human authorities. This transformation in the earth begins in the Church of

[29] This one can't be footnoted because you can't note something that does not exist, but what can be noted is that this list of powers is not found in Moses and in some cases is directly forbidden.

Jesus Christ and the fellowship it becomes, and it is that fellowship, not the power of leaders that is not to be neglected.

II. UPPER ROOM REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP.

A. The Last Supper and the Events of the Upper Room were the last worship service of the Old Covenant and the first worship service of the New. New Testament worship grew organically out of the Highest Feast of the Hebrew Liturgical calendar, the Passover. In this service Jesus transformed the shadows of the memory of Israel's deliverance from slavery into the daylight of the New Covenant Worship of God's people who live the resurrected reality of free men and women delivered from slavery to all authority but His, in heaven and on earth. In this feast it was His blood that was about to be sprinkled on the lintel and door frame their hearts — Hearts now become the New Covenant House of God, the Holy of Holies, the Throne room of God from which flows the River of Life that Ezekiel foresaw, John described and Jesus promised to the wretchedest of women not even in Israel but in hated, false, Samaria. This is what they, with you, are.

B. The events at the Last Supper in the Upper Room are the guide which regulate Christian worship, not by slavish ritual, or abstract principle, but by how God's people dwell with God and each other in the body of Christ.[30] The Corporate gathering of God's people reflects the things that Jesus and the Apostles found important enough to guide their worship there. It is the Lord who regulates Christian Worship concretely and no other abstracted principle.

1. It is worth mentioning that there is literally no direct liturgical teaching about proper worship in the Gospels other than the "the father seeks those who will worship in Spirit and in Truth."

2. This vacuum is readily filled with all sorts of liturgical ideas most of which require a Church structure which lends itself to every sort of corruption. Of course there is no direct guide to refute the next 2,000 years of ritual, but there are some indications in God's law which should be deeply considered as well as the actual practice of Jesus and of the first generation which have been liturgically ignored ever since they were written down.

3. The law of God is a sufficient guide for all things including the worship of God in His New Covenant House: no other Regulative Principle of Worship is needed.

C. The 2nd Commandment, "You shall make no graven images nor bow down to them nor worship them."[31] Is a general principle of worship which we find in its purest form in the Upper Room at that Last Supper to be memorialized in all Christian worship by refusing to treat any liturgy, any ritual, "order" as a means of channeling God's blessing, presence, or grace.

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[30] I Corinthians 11:29.

[31] Deuteronomy 5:8-9

1. No method of worship in and of itself pleases God or forces His blessing or presence.[32] God the Father is seeking those who will worship in Spirit and in Truth. All impressive (or unimpressive) techniques not sinful in themselves are not to become idols of ritual.[33]
2. Almost any form of worship that does not incorporate sin can please God, but none require his blessing even if He blessed them in the past, even if they are otherwise beyond objection. Nothing can compel God's blessing.[34]
3. No form of worship lacking the Spirit and Truth from the heart of the worshipper can be acceptable. Regardless of impeccable form and structure. Some ways of worshipping though blessed in the past will not continue in God's blessing, such as Samuel worshipping in the high places, or Abraham's willingness to engage in human sacrifice, or in a return to the Mosaic temple and purification system.

D. The general application of the 2nd Commandment to worship is found in Jesus' refusal to create a ritual or tradition that would serve as a means of assuring the presence of God or artificially contrive the focus of those attending. Jesus knew that many would miss the point of much of what He taught and not even all his disciples would remember everything. He knew that some people would just get it wrong yet still teach and act in his name.[35] His solution was not holy rituals or special knowledge; it was not even a list of fundamental truths which must be strictly held. Instead, He put His emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not instruct them to solve this problem of failure to listen by forbidding distractions, or creating distraction free meetings, or staging events that would minimize the possibility that someone would fail to grasp what He or His disciples said. He did not institute buildings and rooms designed to focus attention on the speaker, singer, actor.[36] He just didn't seem concerned that someone would miss anything God had planned for him to grasp.[37] Some specific examples of this are —

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[32] Genesis 4.

[33] John 4:23-24.

[34] Genesis 4. Cain and Abel

[35] Numbers 11:26-29; Luke 9:49-50; Mark 9:38-39; I Corinthians 11:18-19; Philippians 1:15-19.

[36] Paul in I Corinthians 12 and 14 does not institute an order presided over by authority figures, nor does he call for special rules of decency and decorum or rituals. Paul does not arrange the congregation to pay better attention. Rather he calls upon them to have hearts who desire to put others first, to listen and speak in a way that discerns the body and honors each person, this is seen in the voluntary holding your peace while another speaks and in speaking in a language all understand, or eating t home rather than consuming all the wine or food at Church. Nowhere does he call for peace keepers martialing God's congregation.

[37] Matthew 13:9-16; Revelation 3:2; Matthew 13:13; Mark 4:12; Isaiah 6:9.

1. There was so much lack of focus in the discussion going around the upper room that they didn't even grasp who was going to betray Him when He told them directly, nor did most of them remember 4 chapters worth of material that only John recorded, and John apparently missed the argument over who was the greatest.
2. So too, Jesus was not deterred or bothered by lack of focus in His listeners the crying children during a sermon, did not evoke a need for a cry room or a special Sunday school or worship service. Instead Jesus took someone who can scarcely be thought of as paying close attention (the child or the mother tending) and declares them to be the epitome, the prime example of a member of His kingdom! Their cries subdue God's enemies. He mmakes sure they are brought down front, no doubt to drive away all those who don't get it and think a child is in the way of the Kingdom. But that is not all that marked his meetings: a mob wanting to kill or abandon him; or arguing disciples carrying on and not paying attention to Him, even on the night of His betrayal and death. He was confident that the Holy Spirit and His Word would penetrate as necessary to accomplish His will in the earth in His Father's time. ***This confidence is the 2nd Commandment in action. No artificial contrivance is necessary to replace, supplement or channel the work of the Holy Spirit.*** This too should be the Principle guiding worship, the confidence of God's leaders and God's people. They should refrain from creating artificial aids to worship such as a stage, lighting, fixed seating, enforced silence, isolating one career-leader-orator-expert who is paid to control or perform all the elements of worship and teaching. These are a few time-honored bronze shield[38] examples of enforcing interest and focus to avoid distraction often in the name of consideration of others or respect for God. Of course when God himself demonstrated that these things in no way respect him, that is not relevant. In short, nothing should be set up that would replace the gold of a person's own intentional desire from the heart to listen, engage and even lead[39] in the events comprising the regular gathering of God's people . . . or not. Let a person's heart be evident in what they do or do not pay attention to.
3. No seating formats guarantee or make impossible a godly outcome. Jesus Himself was lying around on a low eight-inch couch for a good bit of that last worship service in the Upper Room including the institution of the "Lord's Supper" and apparently most of John 13-17. The rest of His disciples were sprawled there with Him. One so disorderly (by later Church standards) as to be lying with His head on Jesus' chest. At a critical point in the meeting the confusion was so great, that this disciple was receiving hand signals from Peter to ask Jesus a question. **This must be pictured to grasp what *doesn't* matter to God when it comes to Christian worship and**

[38] I Kings 14:25-28.

[39] I Corinthians 14:26 "Let ***each*** one of you . . .

fellowship: a room full of people lying around all speaking at once and John his face 6 inches from the Lord of the Universe as his head lay on His chest looking over at Peter frantically signaling to ask, "Tell us who will betray you." And John doesn't even find this story worth recounting in His Gospel. This is not to show the congregation the best position to be in, or to advocate noise and confusion, but rather to show the utter irrelevance in the estimation of God the things which we falsely identify as "necessary order" —

a. ***STOP***! It's God.
b. ***Stop*** and think who Jesus is. HE IS GOD!
c. ***Stop*** and think what is going on. Picture this and let it shake you out of your idolatrous contrivances to replace the ***intent*** of people in the congregation directing their attention with our ***manufactured methods*** of directing their attention and interest through forced methods of attention and focus.
d. ***GOD DID NOT CARE ABOUT THESE IRRELEVANCIES THAT OBSESS ALL MODERN DISCUSSION OF WORSHIP, LITURGICS, AND ORDER.*** — The One who is the object of our worship is the One who did not find significant the position or demeanor of those involved in any gathering whether in the upper room or throughout His ministry.[40] Jesus marked unexpected disruptions in his teaching and worship, as his opportunity to teach and do the unforgettable; like the time they tried to throw Him off a cliff; or the storm in the boat interrupting his prayers or sleep; or being touched by a sick woman; or screaming naked, brutal, murderous, madmen dragged from the tombs to interrupt him; or having a whore pour ointment on his feet in front of the Pharisees, of all people, while He was trying to reach out to them; or the thirty minutes it too to tear a hole in the roof torn in the middle of his sermon; the mothers coming up with their infants and the Disciples shooing them away; the crowd needing to eat; the Samaritan tart thinking she could argue theology and engaging her discussion seriously and as one as worthy as any bearded teacher of the law to think through issues with; and the list is as extensive as the Gospel stories recorded. Not one example exists in the NT of a demand for a particularly prescribed order and people ordained to enforce it. Hundreds — no, every — example is to the contrary.
e. The pattern of Jesus's Teaching and worship is to seize every opportunity a distraction offered. What we find nowhere in His teaching or example is a careful ritual exclusion of the possibility of interruption. This is the Christ God's people follow, not a plaster statue bound by dusty volumes of theology and ritual to be sure to approachjust the right way, say just the right things, be led by just

[40] This is important to nuance. Yes God finds the position of a person and the demeanor and attention of a person significant. Which is why the 2nd commandment forbids using the false contrivances of men to conceal them.

the right people however convincing their pedigree, certification, and arguments for their rightness. In these graven images the Protestant are is profligate as the Catholic.

f. *Make no graven images of the decorum of your worship*.

4. Jesus was most comfortable with an environment that was relaxed in general so people could focus on what seemed to **them** important and only when there was something of sufficient importance to make **their** attention onworth **their** while. He then made whatever it was that distracted them the point of his teaching knowing that that would go memorably to the heart . . . indeed it did because without those interruptions there would be almost no gospels written, all the stories are about when something unusual happened, with only minor exceptions. Whatever Christians do in their meetings that they think needs everyone's attention needs to be something worthy of their attention in and of itself, not artificially placed on the stage to give the appearance of worth regardless of actual value and then have everyone's forced ritualized attention. Realize that God Himself was not bothered when His friends — the Apostles — didn't pay attention and missed things He was saying. Nor was Hebothered when the crowds didn't get His point even when made as simple as could be made with simple stories and parables. So too, Christian worship should not be formed around artificial times of externally imposed totally undistracted ritual attention as if this is a value in and of itself to draw His people near to God.[41] Solemnity that is contrived of ritual is a violation of the 2nd commandment. The reality is, each Christian in the upper room, ***and you***, are the temple of God as they became 50 days later. God is in their/your midst. As Hedraws their attention, as people who are led by the Holy Spirit perceive value in something happening, they should focus on it, and if what is said, or sung, or prayed, or prophesied, or disputed, or eaten, or drunk, or rebuked or encouraged, is sufficiently important, as many people will stop what they are doing and listen or participate appropriately as God intends to do so. This is how leadership rises naturally to the top. Leaders are the ones whose life and words stop people's mouths and arrests their attention only because God works through them. The servant is not greater than the master . . . even when it comes to designing worship.[42]

5. It is a freedom of ideas and spiritual values that God has designed for His people in all they do, not merely in economics. This is how economics works in worship, teaching and fellowship, where not a nickel is involved in the exchanges. It does not improve the situation to impose an artificial order from the top down which only confuses the understanding of the forces that are truly at work and can only

[41] Colossians 2:20-23; I Timothy 4:8.

[42] John 13:16; 15:20; Job 29; I Corinthians 4:19-20.

lead to bad decisions in worship as in the marketplace. God's law is simple and sufficient in the marketplace and in the sanctuary.

6. This same tenor should mark true worship: that it is only as good as the heart, the spirit and the truth of those involved to focus and attend to it. It is not improved by external rules, rituals, constraints and special actors that attempt to force that focus here or there.[43]
7. Such an environment of fellowship, worship and teaching, that is not cramped by time constraints, promotes a natural resistance to the temptation to make the strength and success of the Church depend on the ability of organizers to organize and controllers to control. There are no attendees, only a congregation of royal priests who lead as gifted by God speaking the words of life to one another.
8. The Gentiles who want to rule over the flock say, "Fine, you reject our rules of worship, what are yours?" The worship described in this handbook does not guarantee either the Spirit or Truth and therefore offers no rules that can guarantee them other than a broken and contrite heart which is not a rule at all but a state of being.

a. It is what we see Jesus doing and his Apostles in the next 40 years imitatingwherever conduct in the house of God is discussed.
b. We declare a form that intrinsically resists the reduction of faith to ritual which violates the 2nd commandment. The NT gives us a design that resists the rise of a priestly elder-elite whose very earthly "ordained" powers will stunt the growth of God's people and such freedom to worship will be the first thing they attack.
c. This said, nothing except maturity can overcome the immature desire a congregation might have for the security of children to know there is an all wise, all powerful, disciplinary parental hand close by.[44] Force is how the immature are led. Forceful leaders are how the immature are made to feel secure. Forceful leaders are how a congregation will never grow beyond their immaturity . . . why should they? Let the professionals who know what they are doing handle it.
d. The Church under persecution loses these forceful leaders, replacing them with gifted Ephesians 4 leaders who cannot because of organized hostility, organize themselves into an effective organization of controlling leaders and the result is wild-fire growth. The hirelings among the bureaucrats flee, the solid gold among them are martyred. All that is left is God's bride undistracted by professionals and experts led by the gifted.

9. It is crucial to understand the 2nd commandment here. It would be idolatrous to think that Churches are doing it "wrong" today and then say in effect, "Read my book and learn the set of rules to do it 'right'" so God can finally bless us because we will bind on you the

[43] Colossians 2:21-23; John 4:22-24; Galatians 5.

[44] II Corinthians 11:20.

correct rituals. Adopting or rejecting this or that structure will not make worship or the gathering or the teaching pleasing to God. Rather this is a discussion of how the surroundings of the gathering reflect the freedom the 2nd commandment brings[45] or the bondage of trying to improve on it and creating ritual violations in our worship.

E. **Food** is one aspect of the Upper Room and of the Church meetings in Acts which is consistent with all Old Covenant worship from the food offered at the Creation to Man[46] and then the two fruit trees in heart of the Garden to seal their covenant with God, the food Cain and Able offered to God and ate with Him. The meals the patriarchs made and ate with God, the giant barbecues that were held on the temple altar during feast weeks, and the Tithing Road trips. In John 6 Jesus describes Himself as the food of life, as He did at the last Supper and from there, to the marriage feast of the lamb at the end of the story. Fellowship with God revolved around food. Whatever the ritual or teaching led by an expert that might be involved, it did not get in the way of eating together. Theologically and practically, food defines Biblical fellowship, and so they went from house to house breaking bread together.

1. The characteristics of their service of worship were to gather with everyone else who knows Jesus and eat a meal. In that environment, they work through whatever needs working out, pray, sing, worship, teach, prophesy, rebuke, exhort, encourage and love everyone there and if needed, separate out new congregations from house to house or declare someone or some teaching cut off from the life of the Church.

   a. The room could be filled with comfortable chairs possibly recliners like Jesus used, that can be pulled into any size grouping as needed, from two or three to the whole group focused on an address or song. The very flexibility helps prevent the idea that Christians gather so one person can turn himself into the only person they need to listen to. Not even Jesus Himself organized by forcing anyone to listen or follow. People listened and followed because they wanted to, as long as they wanted to.[47]

   b. The Upper Room design organically emphasizes that everyone needs to be at that point where they find everyone else worth listening to. They discern the Body.[48] Because the design will not guarantee that anyone cares about others, therefore the design should be one that draws out the actual condition of each heart so we can better minister one to another.

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[45] II Corinthians 3:17; James 1:25.

[46] Genesis 1:28ff. (God says more here about food than He does about the Image and purpose of Man)

[47] Mark 10:17-27; John 6 esp. vv 41&60; I John 2:19; Luke 9:57-62; Acts 1.

[48] I Cor 11:29; I Cor 14.

2. At some point while eating, stop and remember that night, Jesus breaking the bread and drinking the wine of the New Covenant inviting his family[49] to eat and drink withat His table until He comes. It is God's table, not the Church's or the elders'. This is not a ritual needing correct performance by the right people to be a blessing. It is a regular practice that goes naturally with the meal and should be repeated in faith to teach the purpose of the meeting and the reality of grace in that moment. It is an opportunity to reflect on our sin and need for the righteousness of Christ. So, though everyone is encouraged to examine themselves, the end result is not to decide whether or not to partake, but rather to partake in anticipation of whatever blessing or judgment God has in store at his table.[50] The Church invites those whom God tells us He has spread his table for: that is, all who call on the name of the Lord and those unable on their own to come whom He commands not to forbid but to provide for, His little ones, the lame, the halt the blind, the mentally handicapped, the elderly and the children. Make straight the paths for the weak kneed.
3. The role of the elders in this whole process at Corinth is most noticeable by the fact that there is none, yet the story of the drunks of Corinth is the cornerstone to defend the authority of elders to control the table which they inevitably transformed from a full-blooded meal into a symbolic ritual by taking control of it where no control is given them, nor is any change indicated as necessary or desirable by Scripture except the change of heart on the part of those partaking, which change is to be judged by them and no one else. Anything not a ritual is useless to a priest and those who grant themselves priestly powers to control (κυριεύουσιν).[51] And therefore we see the meal removed and replaced by something easy to control and turn into a spigot of grace manned by an elite corps of ministers.
4. Throughout the time the Church gathers for fellowship the issues of life are discussed privately and where appropriate, corporately. There is singing and music, instruments for the gifted. People will listen to others say some hard things sometimes personally and privately other times corporately. Then they work it out, like iron sharpening iron, even needing to get everyone's attention so something serious can have the wisdom and judgment of all God's people. The Apostles called together the Church in Acts 15 so the Church in accord with Jesus' words in Mathew 18 could pass judgment on the ministry of Paul as a congregation and then the congregation found it good for the apostles to write a letter of explanation. Everyone is helping each other sort through all the issues of life, learning, maturity, handling sin, error, philosophical

[49] Matthew 24:46-50.

[50] I Chronicles 21:13.

[51] I Corinthians 11:17-34. The term used by Jesus for "controlling authority".

disputes, offense, righteousness and blessing like mature adults confident in the word and judgment of God, not petulant children insecure in all their ways needing a bramble to rule their forest.[52] The Gather is real. Then, as in any group, there are some who are gifted at explaining things or praying for people, or singing or healing, or speaking a word of wisdom or knowledge . . . and at some points, everyone listens to them explain things or pray and sing or lay bare their hearts. It might even be an argument or debate that everyone listens to.

5. It all takes about 2 or 3 hours, then they clean up. It's going to happen again so there is no urgency in the entire service for an agenda though one could be helpful if not canonized.
6. Now, read through the accounts of the last supper, see if this is how Jesus regulated it, being unperturbed by almost everything there that agitates the priests of the Church ever since. Diligently search the writings of his Disciples to see if they ran the Church any other way than Christ.
7. From whence this wisdom of ours to change what we find in Scripture for the convenience of leaders who use worship and order and discipline to put themselves squarely in the doorway of heaven. Not all leaders do this, many in the Church prefer this comforting role of leaders, often leaders and followers deny this sort of priestly authority. But we have yet to see any stand up and renounce their books of order which certainly grant it.

F. I Corinthians 14:26 "How do you do it then? Whenever you come together, ***each*** *of you* has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation."

1. The discussion would not be complete without observing that the fully self-explanatory word Paul gives would be literally ignored liturgically for the next 2,000 years.
2. The only liturgy specified in Scripture is that everyone who comes have something personal to offer.
3. Yes, liturgists say that this is the purpose of *corporate* reading, singing and responsive prayers and statements.
4. But this is clearly not what Paul is saying. He is saying that each of them has something related to their gifts and experience of God's working in their life during the week that is appropriate, . . . No, ***necessary*** to share, to bring. It is a Spiritual pot-luck matching the material potluck they are eating while sharing.

G. As the group grows, it naturally divides, and new groups start up. It would not be wrong to build a meeting house, but administration of the petty can/will consume God's people. No matter what the size of the meeting room or its amenities, at some point by God's grace

[52] I Corinthians 2-3; esp. 4:1-7. Judges 9:1-21.

there must be division for new groups to begin or something terrible will have happened, the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit, the candle stick of Revelation 2-3 will have been quenched and this branch of God's people will have therefore been cut off. It will have stopped filling the earth, subduing it and discipling the nations. This should drive people to their knees and to fall on their faces humiliated at their rank hypocrisy — of claiming to be the fruitful vine of God . . . but bearing no fruit.[53] Yet the sterility of our gathering is unremarkably normal today attracting no one.

H. The ministry of God's people gathering, creates a place in space and time where all may come bringing everyone they meet and all they have learned and experienced during the week. There they gather people who, one day, one person, one experience at a time changeing the world. They don't come to a lecture, (though thtey may hear a lecture or two) nor a special leader (all God's people are special leaders), they come to the people of God who are changed. They come to eat and talk and listen with people who are, like them, the Holy of Holies. You are the place where God has caused his name to dwell a People who discover ways to make it better for each other. They understand service because they understand how God's law and grace meet and kiss in the Cross which now defines their life, fellowship and purpose. Their leaders are not SBW's, Spiritual Big Wigs, who need support, though they may help support them. Leaders are the people the congregation recognizes freely as the best at meeting needs by serving, not the best at running things and keeping everyone in a straight line, nor are they empowered to do so. If they have good ideas people will recognize them and affirm them or join in them and be directed by them. Each individual is the judge of what they will and will not endorse, believe and join in with. The leader is the one people follow apart from any power on his part to get them in line behind him. That is how new leaders are discovered, their life and doctrine is sound, and people follow. This should not change once they become recognized and set apart as if now they needed power to do the very thing that made them fit for selection.

I. The synagogue was not a Biblically ordained form of gathering, though by the time of Christ it was a normal and accepted social structure through which the Jews created a covenant world wherever they went in the earth. There they both preserved their identity as God's people and drew Japheth into the tents of Shem because the world was attracted to the manifest difference God's law made in covenant society. At the time of Christ some estimate their number as 15% of Roman society.[54] This was the seedbed of the Church.

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[53] Revelation 2-3; Psalm 127 & 128; Mark 11:12-14.

[54] Genesis 9:27; Zechariah 8:23. Wikipedia.

1. The synagogue[55] was the opposite of the Temple. The Temple and its worship were strictly defined by its purpose as shadows thrown from the substantive reality of Jesus Christ.[56] As such Temple and its worship were inflexibly fixed like the stone of His people's hearts, in a way God never intended for his People to be after He gave them a new heart and wrote His law on it; made them the new Temple never to return to a single physical location or priesthood again as "The place where God caused his name to dwell" or to priests who "minister before the Lord in behalf of the people" again. The synagogue provided not so much a liturgical pattern for the first-generation Church, any more than the Greek Theatre or Pagan Temple worship did. What it provided was the free-flowing journey from house to house breaking bread not structured by ritual but ordered by the things going on very similar to what we find in the Upper Room and at Corinth 25 years later. The flexibility and freedom of the synagogue fit the new wineskins God prepared for his New Wine so perfectly no one gave it a second thought.
2. So effective is the free flowing worship inaugurated in the Upper Room and carried on by the Apostles, that 20 or 25 years into that first generation Paul addressing the order of worship in Corinth (1300 mile journey over land, sea and time from Jerusalem) sheds a light on what they were doing there and it is remarkably similar to what they did 25 years before in Acts 1-5 where Philip's four virgin daughters prophesy standing next to old Agabus, and the people ran from house to house breaking bread singing, reading God's word teaching and getting healed or getting sick and even dropping dead.
3. Throughout that first generation, the Regulative Principle of the Last Supper in the Upper Room was the norm. A large meal where Christ led through gifted anointing, and the others were admonished by Paul to pay attention to each other rather than each one blithely believing that they had the only contribution worth making or belly worth filling. Order and decency were an application of Ephesians 5 for mutual submission. In no way was order and decency a call to erect an abstract principle of central-ritual-command turning the living Church of Jesus Christ into the ordered rows of a graveyard presided over by whitewashed monuments to a once living and infectious faith.
4. With the passing of the Apostles, the Regulative Principle of Upper Room worship was abandoned in favor of the more rational hierarchy of official mediators controlling the mediated through special rituals and liturgies bringing the meal of God to a ritualized end. A thousand years later, the reformation changed the theology of the priesthood but only adjusted the government they practiced with checks and balances to make it harder for one priest to abuse

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56 Hebrews 1-10.

his power over the members. But the "high place" of the functional priesthood of the committee of leaders remained and was not torn down. Rejecting the Upper Room, rejecting the first few Chapters of Acts, rejecting I Corinthians 12 and 14 the organizers and controllers of the church, even the Reformed, found these Scriptures and practices unfit to apply to any order of worship they could control. Therefore, the historians have sought a foundation and rationale for their worship in the pagan and pre-Christian Jewish world. The best they have been able to do is point to are those aspects of the synagogue having nothing to do with its fitness as a new wine skin. They pointed to the judicial function of elders at the city gate, neither of which were pointed to in the teaching of Jesus or the New Testament, as blueprints for worship or judicial order in the Church. Without comment they went on to adopt the staged production of the Greek theater and the presiding priests of the Roman liturgical world even adopting many pagan names for priestly offices and functions.

5. After 70 AD, the early church laid aside the new wineskins and began their march back into the arms of the pagan forms of authoritarian civil and temple rule, entertainment and organization, forming their worship patterns around them. Within 400 years they had adopted the entire Roman government's civil and temple vocabulary to organize the many layered Church around divine Greek theater of a few actors carrying out a divine ritual before the helpless spectators. Though this pattern and practice is directly forbidden in the New Testament, and nowhere found in the New Testament church, it remains the priestly pattern into the 21st Century Protestant, Congregational, Baptist, Pentecostal and Catholic alike since that day resting their government on paid mediating experts in complete bureaucratic control of the people through officiating over the boiled down rituals of faith enshrined in all books of Church Order written since the Apostles died.[57] This inertia will not be overcome in a day, *nor should anyone try to*.
6. ***This inertia will not be overcome in a day, nor should anyone try to.*** The maturity of God's people will always determine the amount of government needed to control them. Freedom in government form comes from leading them to maturity steadfast discipleship, and example. The revolution must happen in the heart before the governments of the gentiles, even in the Church, will become the Government of the Kingdom of God needing no one to enforce or protect God's people.
7. For now, these congregations can have it no other way whatever idealists might rage. After all, who will care for them? Who will stand in the gap for them? Who will protect and teach them? There is no inkling that the Biblical purpose for the leaders of the Church

[57] See also footnotes 19, 224 & 225.

is not do ministry for people, or to serve as perpetual priests and controllers, but to make them a people in no need of care, protection even teaching because they themselves have been raised up fulfill the Ephesians 4 mandate for Church leadership:

a. to love one another
b. to be united to each other in the bonds of peace
c. To submit to one another
d. Handle every wind of doctrine and unsettling thing that come their way
e. Handle any disciplinary issue.
f. Clearly in no need of paid professional career tracking elite expert fathers or else somewhere Paul would have described such leaders and empowered them to control the congregation.[58]

8. What the New Testament calls for is the confidence of leaders who focus on building up the congregation sure that the least among them will carry on the fight as well as the greatest among us did in the last 2,000 years. The least esteemed member will have all the tools needed to transform the earth and do greater things than Jesus.[59] There will be no immature little ones to be swept away by error and heretics when the elders Jesus envisioned have fulfilled their office and the worship and ministry of the Church is restored.
9. There will be no need for a leadership elite.

[58] Matthew 23; Ephesians 4-5.

[59] John 14:12-14.

III. GOD'S WORD ORDAINS HIS CONGREGATION

A. God's people are those who are created and sustained by the Holy Spirit speaking through the word, over time, correcting errors that plague the doctrine, ministry and peace of His people. God's word and Spirit continue to correct and refine His people in the Truth as they grow in Grace and maturity through space-time history until His Kingdom fills the earth to the extent which He deems sufficient for his return.

1. Doctrinally, the Church has always declared its dependence on the sufficiency and efficacy of Scripture and its dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit.[60]
2. But in actual practice, the Church governs itself with the authoritarian, power of Priests, Bishops and Elders who, through their control of the sacraments, worship, teaching, and doctrine, take credit for maintaining the purity of the Faith, the protection of the faithful, and credit for sifting the true from the false over the millennia.
3. Authoritarian government however, is no more responsible for whatever growth the Church has had than the Pharaohs were responsible for the rise and the fall of the Nile. For three millennia they went out each spring to perform the Nile-Arise ritual, and then a month later returned to perform the Nile-Recede ritual. They proved through historical "fact" that they control the Nile. The rains on the Upper Nile, are the true force for what the Pharaohs through their rituals took credit. In the same way it is the Word of God sifting out His people and establishing them regardless of the elders, who like the Pharaohs, believe that their sacramental, doctrinal and ritual control of God's people and their labors as judges in church courts are the source of the advance of the Church in the world.[61] What is undeniable is that the fact that their ranks have been the source of most of the error in the Church.
4. God will not share his Glory with another; nor will He allow His Word and Spirit to be contained, and ordered by human organizations.[62] He discipled His elders to be free of all extraneous table cleaning, administration and judicial distractions.[63] He told them that their only passion would be to disciple the congregation by making the Truth of God's word clear, applying it to their lives through prayer, teaching, example, and the power of the Holy Spirit.[64] Their ministry has only one end purpose — to create a self-

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[60] Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8.

[61] Jeremiah 23:32-40.

[62] Acts 8:19-21; John 3:5-8; Ecclesiastes 11:5.

[63] Luke 12:13-14; Acts 6:4.

[64] John 13:12-17 & 21:15-19; Luke 22:25-27; Acts 6:4; I Corinthians 2:1-5; I Peter 5:3.

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controlled[65] body of people who do the work of the ministry as opposed to the elite-leader/submissive-follower that the congregation of God has become.[66]

5. Christ commanded his leaders to move only in the power of the Holy Spirit;[67] Jesus taught them to reject the power of human organizational titles and offices which control the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit.[68] Peter cursed Simon the Christian Sorcerer who thought that control of the Holy Spirit could be passed from one leader to another whether by purchase or any other way.[69]

B. The transforming Grace of Jesus Christ writing His word on His people's new heart,[70] and the work of the Holy Spirit speaking through that word,[71] differentiates God's congregation from the world and from the world's forms of government.[72] Where this commitment to God's word exists, all doctrines and governments over time can and will be refined and corrected wherever they are mistaken or misapplied.[73] Those who reject God's word as written to be final for all creation, and reject that word's application to the center of each Christian's being will, instead of transforming the world, will soon be shaped by the world and become indistinguishable from it, tasteless salt on a dung heap.[74]

1. God's word is a complete, self-consistent and self-interpreting. It needs no other source, authority or proof than the affirmation of the Holy Spirit;
2. No one can understand God's word apart from the Holy Spirit speaking through it and opening their eyes, ears, mind and heart;[75]
3. It is complete, unique and preserved to our day from Genesis to Revelation, nothing is to be added to or taken from it;[76]
4. True doctrine is that which is found in every verse of Scripture whose meaning is self-consistent, such as the Doctrines of Scripture, the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ, the Creation, the Fall, Man, God, Atonement, Law, Grace, Providence, God's plan to transform

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[65] II Timothy 1:7.

[66] Ephesians 4:7-16.

[67] John 14-17; Zechariah 4:6; Acts 1:1-3.

[68] Exodus 20:6; Matthew 23:8-12.

[69] Acts 8:19.

[70] Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:20 & 36:26; John 15:7-10; Hebrews 8:10 & 10:16.

[71] Jeremiah 31:34; Ezekiel 11:19 & 36:26; John 14:16,26 & 15:26 & 16:13; Hebrews 8:11.

[72] John 14:16-18; Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25.

[73] John 14-17; Matthew 28:18-19.

[74] Matthew 5:13, Jude 1:5-19; II Peter 2.

[75] John 6:63-65.

[76] Matthew 5:18; Revelation 22:18-19.

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the earth in space-time History, etc..

5. All Scripture proclaims Jesus Christ, His work and His plan for all time because Jesus is God, the Son, slain before the foundation of the world of which He is its creative architect and redeemer; His incarnation is the purpose and reason for all things;[77]
6. This sufficiency of Scripture in no way contradicts the fact that God's revelation to us has not ceased. It is because His finished written word is the measure of all things that anyone believes or says, that the Church can be confident that God's word tries the spirits making it possible for the spiritual man to judge in its light, all other judgments, gifts, prophesies, teachings, feelings, or revelations.
7. Because His Word is all He needs to accomplish His purpose,[78] God has no need of human leaders empowered by human organizations to impose their idea of discipline to winnow His people as if either God's congregation is impotent to act for themselves or too ignorant to pass judgment in His name.[79]

C. Where these things are a firm conviction it follows, that Scripture, ***not*** the interpretation or decrees of men or counsels, is the final court of appeal for all thoughts, doctrines, philosophies, controversies, freedoms, governments and worship. Therefore, we can live confidently in the knowledge that it is not the Elder's job to sift God's people for Him, but rather they rule by "the word of their testimony, the blood of the lamb, and that they do not love their lives unto death."[80] This is the rule of the Cross that Jesus Spoke of in Matthew 16.

D. The congregations of the Church are not devoid of leadership, nor of the ability to discipline themselves and pass judgment simply because the Lord did not establish an office of final judge above the people to be held by a few leaders,[81] (whether they call themselves priests or merely representatives of the Church is not relevant to the truth that they function as priestly mediators.)[82] That final judgment resides in the duty and obligation of the individual Christian to judge all things and be judged by nothing,[83] and for the congregation as a

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[77] Luke 24:25-27; Revelation 13:8.

[78] Isaiah 55:11; Psalm 19.

[79] Ephesians 1 & 4:11; I Corinthians 5; Jeremiah 31; Hebrews 8 & 10; Matthew 18:15-20.

[80] Revelation 12:11.

[81] Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25; I Peter 5:3.

[82] 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:9-10. Priest is as priest does. Reformed and Baptist elders alike function as every inch a Roman or Orthodox priest in so far as they believe they exclusively hold the power to control worship, discipline, sacraments and teaching.

[83] Revelation 2:2; I Corinthians 2:15; I John 4:1.

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whole to apply corporate judgment when it is called for, which in the coming chapters, this handbook will show how and why this can be done without the need of specially empowered leaders exercising disciplinary authority over congregations lest they devolve into anarchy and chaos.[84]

1. The leaders' authority to judge and bind people is not the result of his office, or ordination. The leaders' power to judge rests in the fact that the Leaders are Christians. There is no office or institutional authority or power in the Church beyond those powers accessible to "the least of these my brethren" which includes leaders.
2. Those who lead are not especially empowered to control the Holy Spirit; nor to examine or control another's standing in the faith; nor membership in the body of Christ; nor access to any sacrament, blessing or curse the Church has to offer beyond what any Christian is empowered to do, or say, by the Spirit speaking through the Word.[85]
3. Though Scripture does not grant such status to leaders, it is not a silence on this topic that requires God's people to refuse to grant priestly powers to their leaders. There are at least five positive reasons in Scripture itself which call God's people to reject special controllers in the Church even though all the history of the world from Genesis 3:16 on; and all the history of the Church, except that covered by the New Testament; tells us that it is impossible to govern an organization without authoritative controllers in the office of control.

a. **Reason #1 —** Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:15-22 empowers the Congregation as the final court of appeal. The congregation is not limited to passing judgment as a single organization or needing to authorize committees to judge with authority, but can pass binding judgments in ad hoc groups as small as 2 or 3 and even as individuals, as when Peter passed judgment on Ananias, and Paul on Hymenaeus and Alexander, with no record of ecclesiastical empowerment or approval. Yes, this is absurd to the Gentile or unregenerate understanding of political reality — to the mind that knows neither the Spirit nor law of God. "Moses, make them stop prophesying in the camp." The elders of old demanded knowing that

[84] Matthew 18:15-18; See *Chapter IV, The Final Court of Appeal* and *Chapter V, the Growth and Division of the Church.* Luke 1:34; Luke 18:27. Throughout this Handbook, the presupposition is that Jesus said it is possible, His disciples did it, therefore it is for us to learn and follow not decide what is impossible for God and go our own reasonable way.

[85] Acts 8:19; John 3.This perhaps is the most contentious point of the handbook. Please note each of these points in this paragraph which are common understandings of all church government since the 2nd century have no Scripture backing up an exclusive grant of power to leaders. The power conveyed to the leaders by these forms of government is due to the hardness of heart since the fall. But from the beginning it was not so.

when the Spirit falls outside the political power structure it spells the end of rule by political power structures. Moses' response is fulfilled by NT Church government: "Would that all God's people were prophets, would that He put His Spirit on all of them." Therefore, Christ calls us to reject this mind. Paul calls us to have this mind renewed. The Law of Moses was not designed for an outside government to rule over others, but for each person to rule his heart by the Holy Spirit.[86] Yet because of the hardness of their heart before Christ, it was fitted to various versions of authoritarian control.

b. **Reason #2 —** With all the problems in Corinth, Paul never appeals to elders in any way to solve them, nor does he attribute them to a lack of elders or their proper functioning. Most notably are these 7 examples of issues the Church since Paul unanimously agrees are the special jurisdiction of elders and priests —

i. Concerning the Lord's Table as well as standing in the faith, no elder is called upon to fence or examine anyone. Only self-examination is required to evaluate worthiness. The Lord is set forth as fully able to fence and discipline his Table without priestly control granted to leadership-men to reach out and steady the ark;[87]

ii. To resolve disputes, any member is superior to any pagan judge and fit to judge in the Church; [88]

iii. Decency and order is not established by an elder empowered to control the events of the gathering to eat, drink, conduct business and worship, rather each member is appealed to, to recognize each other exercising self control;[89]

iv. No elder judges sin, the congregation does. Paul joins his Apostolic judgment to the congregation's in the matter of incest to judge the man who the congregation should have judged for themselves, long before Paul ever heard the matter. Paul calls the congregation to judge his confrontation of those claiming to be apostles to determine for themselves who speaks by the Spirit and Power of God.

v. Argument from Silence — Search the two letters and underline the role of the elder in all verses where Paul prescribes one. Note also in the margin where you thought the elder should have an exclusive role, but Paul didn't. Remarkable isn't it?

vi. Argument from positive command and example — Now, underline the responsible agent Paul appeals to in any situation you thought belonged exclusively in the jurisdiction of an elder. The only role an elder has is a role that is brought into the text by the commentator, not by the pen of Paul.[90]

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[86] Numbers11; Matthew20:25; Ephesians 1; I Corinthians 2:9-16; Romans 12:1-2.

[87] I Corinthians 11:27-31; II Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:4; Romans 14:4.

[88] I Corinthians 6:1-6.

[89] I Corinthians 12.

[90] Ephesians 1:17-19.

c. **Reason #3 —** When instructing Timothy and Titus, not only does Paul ***NOT*** give any instruction for tribunals to resolve problems, but the exact opposite, Paul instructs elders to solve all problems through attention to doctrine, character, service, love and knowing when to refuse to argue. Search all 3 letters and see. Underline every way Paul instructs them to overcome sin, criticism, error and opposition in the Church. You find a manual in how Character leads by example, not in a rule for legal process.

d. **Reason #4 —** Though members of the congregation are on occasion admonished to submit to elders, there is no corresponding empowerment of elders to enforce that submission. Elders are, in fact, told by Jesus and Peter to reject this power so characteristic of Gentile government.[91] The admonitions to submit come precisely because there was no power to enforce it therefore appeal must be made to the only ones who have the power to submit.

e. **Reason #5 —** The congregation is admonished not to submit to or join anyone even an Apostle or an Angel from heaven where they are in error.[92]

4. Peter[93] clearly shows how affirming the Truth makes him an Apostle, to be obeyed, and rejecting Truth makes him an Apostle to be disobeyed, challenged and corrected. His Apostolic anointing, appointment, ordination, even masculinity, or gifting does not grant him the status of "one to be submitted to." In light of Matthew 18:17 this confirms that it is the judgment of each member of the congregation that is final for that member, not the judgment of an "officer" of an organization called, "elders of the Church" while their court is, "in session."

5. The judgment of the congregation does not bind the one, or the faction judged, though it may separate them from the congregation and may define the points at which the congregation is agreed. It may be that the minority or the sole advocate of a position or practice is the one defending the truth, such as Paul when he alone stood up to the Judaizers in Galatia, opposing Peter and James, or Elisha in hiding is fed by ravens, Shama in his bean field, Jael in her tent. The individual stands or falls on God's word even if removed from that particular fellowship. The individual is free to establish a work in which the Holy Spirit demonstrates that he is correct or not. If he is not, God is perfectly capable of dealing with him over time, and He will.[94] Bitterness, rancor and malice have no place in determining doctrine or error, nor in dealing with it, being entirely unnecessary.

6. To summarize — The Scripture does not give 1) control of worship,

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[91] Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25; I Peter 5:3.

[92] Galatians 1:6-9 & 2:11; Revelation 2:2.

[93] Matthew 16:13-23.

[94] This introduces the issue which *Chapter V, The Growth and Division of the Church* explains more fully.

2) control of who teaches, 3) control of who gets baptized or partakes of the Lord's table, 4) control of any trial or examination to be the special purpose of leaders in the Church however they might be selected, elected, appointed, named, or whose hands are laid on them. This is how government works in all other organizations which Jesus negatively called, "Gentile".[95] By contrast, these things are the heritage given to all God's people who are members of Christ jointly and severally and not under the control or power of anyone.[96] These powers are not kept safe on the congregation's behalf by an ecclesiastical *guardian ad litem* . . . Unless, and this is an important exception, *unless the congregation are children unable to handle the meat of the word, not yet come of age, in need of authoritarian guardians.* Then the authoritarian rule is an appropriate and honest admission not to be seen as a slander. The writer of Hebrews is grieved over this immaturity confident that it would be overcome.

7. The belief that without authoritative elders or pastors a congregation today is incapable of resisting anarchy, heresy and sin is an admission of the failure of Gentile government to disciple the congregation to maturity in Christ as defined by Ephesians 1 and 4. There are those who will say that this handbook accuses them or their congregations of immaturity. Let us be clear, this is not a charge of this handbook against any church, elder or congregation. It is rather the confession of all those who defend Gentile government on the grounds that they do not believe that a sufficiently mature congregation exists that would not fall apart without special officers in charge empowered to maintain the unity and purity of the faith. They are the ones who bring this accusation that they have failed after 2000 years produce an Ephesians 4 ecclesia, congregation.

E. The true authority and power of the Church and those ordained to lead it, is the authority and power of the Holy Spirit. The ever-present temptation is to replace what only the Holy Spirit can do with Authoritarian governments of Elders who rise up to replace the call and ministry of the Holy Spirit with their various tests, educational programs and votes designed to produce a qualified leader whether the Holy Spirit qualifies him or not and to provide the leaders they qualify with a human certification and a sociologically comfortable niche complete with a theater and book of order, in which people look for them to be so identified with the ministry of the Church that only they are uniquely called "ministers" and are to be uniquely submitted to.

F. In conclusion then, the elders/bishops/pastors/teachers/prophets of the Church inherit the Apostolic task to disciple (not discipline) the

[95] I Timothy 2:5; Mark 10:42-45; Acts 8:19-23. Gentile, Grk, ἔθνη, Heb. גויים Is the common term for the covenant breaking nations.

[96] I Corinthians 12:12-21 & 6:19-20 & 3:16; I Peter 2:5; Matthew 18:15-18.

Church which is carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit to speak through the ministry of the Word, prayer and example.[97] Their sole undistracted passion is to disciple unto spiritual, ethical and judicial maturity congregations capable of passing all such judgments and performing all actions that have been thought to be the special province and powers of the leaders.

1. Through, the ministry of the word, prayer and sound example they are to passionately devote themselves to producing a congregation characterized by ethical and judicially mature love, hope, and mutual submission to one another,[98] of which they are exemplary examples of submission and service, confident that God's transforming Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit and ministry of the word dwelling richly in each believer will reveal, sanctify and establish His people over time, each person governing their own life according to God's law written on their recreated hearts.[99]
2. Scripture will always find and form God's people. It is the grid which sifts them out through all mankind, throughout the millennia. The elder's task is not to be the examiner and judge of God's people as if he is the door to the sheepfold; nor is he to control God's people with the power to control their standing in Christ, their worship, teaching and the sacraments. The power to control these things in the life of the Church is by definition the power of *priestly mediation* which makes it Christ's alone. It is the power of the people of God who are his only earthly priests.[100] Rather the leader is to faithfully teach God's word in season and out. He is to faithfully contrast it with error, but not erect himself as a court to pass judgment on those who are in error except to pronounce their error, pray against it, warn them of it, argue and perhaps if no other way can be found to convince them, and the matter is serious enough, he doing what any Christian could do, bring them before the congregation whom he has discipled, confident that God will grant them sound judgment.
3. The only true Schism in the congregation is between those who affirm the word of God as final authority and those who do not. All other issues depend on understanding that word and therefore call merely for division of a congregation. It is important to clarify what is and is not meant by a final court of appeal.
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[97] Acts 6:4; I Peter 5:3.

[98] Ephesians 5; I Corinthians 13; I Peter 1:22; John 4:7-8.

[99] Ephesians 1 and 4; II Corinthians 13:14; Acts 20:28.

[100] Galatians 3:28; I Peter 2:5. This doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers and the right and duty of personal judgment served the revolutionaries of the Reformation well, literally transforming the governments of the earth, not just in the Church. But has been steadily eroded by those who inherit their titles and mantle.

IV. THE FINAL COURT OF APPEAL

A. The Scriptures as written and preserved by God are final. They are the dividing line between a people whom God promised would remain faithful to Him and transform the earth, and one that will in time become indistinguishable from the Covenant breaking gentile world and be removed with it.[101]

B. God alone is the final judge and Lord of the conscience. He judges each person justly for how they handled the issues of their faith and life holding them responsible for their own judgments.

1. ***The individual conscience is for that individual, the final judge for the interpretation, application and obedience to Scripture***. Each believer is held accountable for what they believe and cannot be made just or absolved of guilt if they believe or do the wrong thing at the command or influence of others. Otherwise the believer could argue, "This elder that you gave me, he gave me the fruit and I ate." and be held faultless for his sin. There is only one atonement for sin. The believer stands alone before the justification or condemnation of God, *". . . every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."*[102]

2. ***Being the final judge does not mean the individual believer is correct in his judgments.*** As people often twist this point. It means that the individual is the only one responsible for his decision and action. There is no other name under heaven whereby he can be saved from his sin whether he does it on his own devices, or if he commits it at the direction of others. The covenantal effect of one person's sin often spills over to affect other lives, but the personal responsibility for it is the sinner's alone.

C. It is because of personal responsibility that where Christians differ in belief, expression or practice of their faith, they have a responsibility to agree where they can, be charitable where they cannot and to separate peacefully where unity of faith and practice are impossible to attain under the same roof.

1. These steps are not to be taken lightly. They should not be taken in haste, anger or strife. They are part of contending for the faith confident that the Holy Spirit will sort out the difference.

2. It is no small error to submit when one should have taken a stand. This is because someone believing or doing the wrong thing is not made righteous simply because their submission to authority was to husband, elder or king.

3. Likewise, it is no small thing to take a stand when one should have submitted. This is because rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and the unity of the faith and loving, serving and laying down our lives

[101] Genesis 3:15; Romans 1; Revelation 2-3 Malachi 2:3.

[102] Deuteronomy 24:16; Jeremiah 31:29:30; Ezekiel 18:20.

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for one another — which is the spiritual reality of what unity is — is one of the highest callings of the believer second only to the first commandment.[103]

4. It is because of this fact that authorities cannot compel the assent of the individual believer. Ultimately all stand before God and must give their own account. It is this reliance on the Holy Spirit and God's word that makes it possible to contend intensely and thoroughly yet without bitterness, confident that the outcome is the Lord's, so they can work through issues until they are resolved or ways peaceably part and final trust and appeal made to God to reunite, sustain, perfect, or rid the world of one or the other of the disputants.

D. God's law in general and the New Testament in particular presents the world with the amazing concept that humanly speaking, final authority is not lodged in the mediation or atonement of a specialized priesthood, or in the traditions of the fathers, but in each unmediated believer who stands naked directly before God, [104] fully at the mercy of the only mediator whose word is binding — indeed who is called the Word of God.[105]

1. If a special group of leaders has power to declare guilt because their word was rejected or declare innocence because their word was submitted to they would be both the de facto mediator of grace, and the one who can atone for sins, as long as the sins are committed in submission to their will. Yes, this power does exist: "Those whose sins you retain will be retained and those whose sins you forgive will be forgiven." Might be taken in isolation from its immediate context and the context of what would take place in a few days from the time Jesus said it. Clearly whatever power is granted to the Apostles is granted to the congregation, in Matthew 18, and Acts 2, not to a class of leaders uniquely filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus grants the power of the Holy Spirit to His Apostles in John 20:21-23, not because they are unique officers, but because they are the first fruit of the power of God's Spirit granted to the entire congregation, men women and children in Acts 2 and following unto the close of the age.
2. Jesus affirms the authority of the leaders to lead particularly those who sit in the seat of Moses and to be treated with serious respect.
3. Jesus denies that trusting in the error of those sitting in the seat of

[103] John 17; I John esp. 4:7-8, Ephesians 1; 4:1,3,13,25; 5. Philippians 2:1; I Corinthians 13; "Love your neighbor as yourself" leads a list of possible verses to cite here that is almost endless.

[104] 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10; Exodus 20 — The Decalogue is given to "you" singular, personally by God, "***I*** AM". It is not first delivered to the "authorities" to compel your third-party obedience. The Law is the grammar of the Word. Third party ruler-empowerment is a result of the fall and curse.

[105] I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:1-4; 4:11-16, John 1.

Moses absolves the personal guilt of the one who trusted them, otherwise He would not have said that the followers are ***twice*** as fit for hell as the Pharisees who are in Mosaic authority over them.[106]

E. All are held individually and personally liable for their beliefs and actions because each person is unmediated by any other believer or authority in respect to their responsibility to understand, believe, evaluate, grow in maturity, and act on the truth. No one can do this ***for, or in behalf of,*** someone else who is a mature adult.[107]

F. The Obligation of Private Judgment is another way of saying, "God alone is Lord of the conscience." He has made it free from any doctrines or commandments of men which are in any respect contrary to the Word of God.

G. This is the most radical doctrine of the Reformation — It is the statement that each person is responsible to know the truth[108] from God speaking through His Word and applying it to each heart and situation. Each person will be personally judged based on their understanding and acceptance of it, not on their faith in and agreement with other authorities. These authorities cannot cover the believer's sin who trusts in them where they are wrong. There is only one atonement, only one mediator.

1. This idea separates those who have their power, meaning and place granted to them by their approval from an authoritative hierarchy of men, as opposed to those who gain their power, meaning and place from who they are in Christ.

2. Luther, Calvin, and later Reformers, Owen, JC Ryle, Alexander Hodge and all other reformation thinkers strenuously taught in strikingly clear and bold terms this doctrine of private judgment. It is not clear if they fully realized the acid this doctrine represents to all theories of Church government that place unique power in a central command. Regardless of theology, the believers in central church government will in time be driven by the logic and power of their office to require enforced submission of believers as an essential component of saving faith. Cyprian's summary will become theirs, "You cannot have God as your Father if you do not have the Church as your Mother."

a. If the reformers are correct — and the entire reformation was based on this idea — final judgment belongs to the individual and not to any priest, elder, counsel, congregation, husband, judge, king, or Pope. The individual has the final say on what he will believe and do and it is a self-maledictory judgment he passes — each will be personally judged based on it. Without this doctrine there is no doctrine of personal responsibility, merely the responsibility to

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[106] Matthew 23:15.

[107] Jeremiah 31:29-30; Matthew 25 especially vv29-46.

[108] Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45.

submit to, obey, and agree with whomever is in authority and trust in them for mediation and absolution before God's throne.

b. This is quite different from saying that the individual is correct in his final judgment, much less that God will accept that final judgment. The individual can be as wrong or right as any authority.

c. But only the individual is responsible for their own judgment concerning God's Word, what it means, how it applies and what they do about what they know.

3. All government to be godly must respect and nurture this authority of self-government in Christ and disciple each person to judge maturely, to judge truly and to act faithfully with integrity, not merely to follow the crowd even if it is a crowd of leaders who can and will punish them.[109]

a. A fundamental principle of this Handbook on Church Government is the inability of the elders to rule over the congregation by imposing discipline or requiring them to interpret the Bible their way. It is a fundamental encroachment into Christ's final mediation. Rather their teaching must be such that draws all men to Him, not that drives all men to their idea of Him.

b. The powers of the leaders in the Church will be taken up below under, *IX. THE POWER OF LEADERS.*

c. What follows is for leaders who will disciple mature congregations, capable of conflict and resolution, not congregations of self-willed children needing an authoritarian master.[110] How congregations can do this without themselves replacing the mediation and atonement of Christ will be discussed in Chapter *V. DIVISION vs SCHISM IN THE BODY* OF CHRIST..[111]

d. Whether in the home, the state or the Church, submission commanded by God is only to be given to the leader, "as unto the Lord," or "in Christ." These words do not empower the leader, they limit his power to what the ***follower*** perceives as being Christ-worthy.

4. Scripture requires unity among those who are obligated to do and believe only those things that they believe are right.[112] Every passage calling for love, is the statement that unconstrained unity in Christ is not only possible, but will become the reality of history.

a. External authoritarian force is often appealed to as necessary because it's the only thing that can force a measure of unity. This appeal only underlines the fact that it is a false appearance of unity. The choice is not between Authoritarian unity vs. Anarchy. The reality is, both are a form of anarchy. Force gives the illusion of

[109] Ephesians 4:11, Matthew 28:17-18.

[110] Ephesians 4:11; Matthew 18:17-18; Galatians 2; Matthew 16:13-23;

[111] Matthew 18:15-20.

[112] Ephesians 1; 4; 5; I Corinthians 1; John 17.

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unity, and some of its benefits, just as anarchy gives the illusion of freedom along with some of its benefits.

b. In reality, neither solves the basic problem which is a heart problem. Neither unity nor freedom can be imposed from the outside but must come from the heart. The heart Scripture claims is what Christ transforms and dwells in and writes His law on.

H. The New Covenant is not limited by the Authoritarian remedies granted by God at the fall to prevent humanity from falling into hopeless chaos.[113]

1. The Prophets foresaw a day in which God's people would themselves be transformed into people who could govern themselves freely.[114]

2. The fundamental doctrines of the faith define the work of salvation as creating a people sufficiently redeemed from the curse and hard heart to be capable of self-government —

a. **The Incarnation** to show that the True Man, self-governed by God's law is possible.

b. **The Atonement** to first justify and forgive, and then to transform each believer from the heart makes them capable of self-government.[115] But going beyond justification and sanctification, the atonement is God's pattern for the ministry of the New Creation.

c. **The Ascension** into Heaven from where Christ personally reigns in all the earth uniting His people now capable of followingwithout institutional mediation.[116]

d. **Pentecost,** The giving of the Holy Spirit who writes God's law on the believer's newly recreated heart so he is not left without Word or Guide to govern himself in agreement with all others who have God's word written on their heart.[117]

3. The achievable goal of the Christian life is not perfection, but it is to be sufficiently spiritually mature in Christ, to be self-governed by the reality of the transformation which Christ has accomplished which rejects the use of outside force to falsely give the impression of a unity (which if it were truly there) would not require that external force.

4. It is the unregenerate mind outside of Christ which believes that only the strength of the central planner can force the appearance of unity where there is none in the stony heart.

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[113] Genesis 3:2&16.

[114] Numbers 11:25-29; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20 & 36:26.

[115] Romans 5:1; 3:24; Ephesians 2:28-9; II Corinthians 5:17-21.

[116] Daniel 7:13-14&27; Psalm 110; Colossians 1; Ephesians 1 & 4; Philippians 1; John 14-17. "Because I go to the Father, Greater things than these shall you do."

[117] Jeremiah 31:34; John 14-17.

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5. Self-government then, means that the final human court of appeal by which the individual stands or falls is what the individual judges to be true concerning the word of God and what they do to obey and be bound by what they have judged.[118]

I. This sort of Ephesians 1&4 and II Corinthians 2-4 believer forms mature congregations who are capable of resolving most disagreements, but when there is a sufficiently serious impasse, they make their next growth-division one that separates out the conflicting group (or individual) to establish its own congregation (or flee fellowship) and trusts God to judge between them, as will be spelled out in Chapter V.[119]

1. The goal of all Biblical government is to minimize external coercion; to respect men and women who discern for themselves according to God's law what is right and good and to act on it.[120]
2. The shape of all government and its powers will always reflect the maturity and therefore the capability of those governed to govern themselves. The long-rm success of tyranny or freedom is the level of maturity in the congregation, or body politic, as a whole.
3. Therefore, only free self-governing people who have proven that they can get along like adults with others without violating God's law will successfully create free governments ruled increasingly by those exercising the power of the "least of these" to love the fellowship of God's people.[121]
4. Until then, the specific limitations on the powers of government will be in direct proportion of the maturity of God's people to live lives self-directed by God's law.[122]

J. Spiritually mature congregations and elders will not need authoritarian government to disciple God's people.

1. Bondage can be forced on a people, liberty cannot. The power of government can restrict but not free. Freedom is the result of growth and maturity from the heart, not imposition from the outside. Those convinced of the things they read here have as their only avenue for change the command and example of Christ and His Apostles to make disciples, not take control. Freedom is not the fruit of force.
2. Freedom from the Curse of Genesis 3:16 will only be experienced in proportion to the ethical and judicial maturity of the people.

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[118] I Corinthians 2:11-15; 4:3; Galatians 1:8; II Timothy 1:7.

[119] Genesis 13:9, 31:49; I Samuel 24:12.

[120] Ephesians 6:6 Paul takes coercion out of the most coercive of all human institutions without removing the authority of the owner.

[121] Luke 22:25ff, "The master sits at the table, but I am among you as a servant."

[122] Matthew 9:29.

V. DIVISION vs SCHISM IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.

A. The Growth of God's people is an expected and normal part of the victory of Christ in the earth and so dividing the congregation that runs out of space to meet should be a normal part of congregational life.[123]

1. As the group grows, thought should always be given for where to divide and go to next as well as the budding leadership to lead that move.

2. Growth is the irresistible presence of the Holy Spirit in the congregation giving life and meaning to the food, fellowship, worship, prayer, singing, teaching, prophesy,[124] rebuke, exhortation, encouragement and love.

3. If the group stops growing, then address 4 questions:

a. **What issues of life personally or in the surrounding world are no longer addressed** in the group such that people no longer see that God is among you credibly addressing the issues of life with a word that cuts to the bone?

b. **What issues have replaced discipleship** and so distract the minds and hearts of leaders from their one call in the congregation and thereby distract the congregation such that people no longer see that God is among you credibly addressing the issues of life with a word that cuts to the bone?

c. **Why do we no longer see life in the congregation** and therefore people no longer see that God is among you credibly addressing the issues of life with a word that cuts to the bone?

d. **Why is the Gospel no longer perceived as hope for every square inch of the world around us** and so people no longer see that God is among you credibly addressing the issues of life with a word that cuts to the bone??

e. Each of these questions addresses the heart of the existence of the congregation. Either life and meaning is found in Christ and the fellowship of God's people, or it is not. If it is not, growth stops.

4. Outreach is a function of the heart, each person living the life that has found them, giving each person meaning and purpose in the mutual discipling fellowship of God's people. When these run dry in the life of the congregation, no motivation or technique will fill the void or in the end do anything but kill the fellowship.[125]

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[123] Genesis 12:1-3; 13:1-13; 15:5; 22:17; 31:49; Acts 2:46; 5:42.

[124] Throughout, "prophesy" as a noun or a verb is God's word, alive and active like a two edged sword, in the ministry of God's people who speak and apply it incisively. The form such an application comes in is less important than that the prophetic word be in subordinate conformity to the revealed word of God.

[125] Revelation 2:4-5. (How many renewal ministries depend on replacing the Holy Spirit with a growth strategy or apologetic methodology?)

5. Authoritarian government is useful precisely because it can continue the appearance of life, unity and doctrinal integrity, preserving a measure of each until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.[126]
6. *"Dear friends, even though we are talking this way, we really don't believe it applies to you. We are confident that you are meant for better things, things that come with salvation."*[127]
7. Authoritarian government will itself be cast off like an old cloak when that star has risen and the resulting growth will be unmatched a foretaste of which can be seen in persecuted churches where no superstructure of elite leaders is allowed by a hostile state to form and God shows what His people are capable of if only they would keep the institutional bureaucrats out of their marriage bed.

B. There are things other than outgrowing the room, which lead to the separation of God's people.

1. Should the differences in the congregation be found sufficiently insoluble, the congregation will send forth the disputant and any who agree with them or are offended by the congregation's judgment. They will go with its blessing or dire warning, but always with fervent prayer that they be established in the Truth should they start their own congregation based on their error or sin. It must be remembered that when Athanasius stood against the world, the "world" of the bishops who opposed him believed him to be in error and sin.

a. Division is not necessarily schismatic, but a recognition of our limitations as finite creatures to finally judge one another in a context where God's word is final, but its meaning disputed.

b. Division is only schismatic if any difference or agreement rests on the belief that God's written word is not final.[128]

2. Separation for any reason is always in faith that God will guard his divided people from error, and will in time, sift the error or sin out along with those shaped by it and reunite them.[129]

3. Each side of the disagreement should always in humility search the

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[126] I Peter 1:19; Galatians 4:19; Hebrews 5:12; II Chronicles 12:9-12.

[127] Hebrews 6:9.

[128] John1:1-10; 16:13-18; I Corinthians 5:11; Ephesians 5:11; I John 4:2-3; II John 1:7. For example the Paedo and credo Baptists or communionist are not schismatic in respect to each other even though they will tend to go to different fellowships. The Liberal who says that God's word is not final is, by contrast schismatic even though that liberal may be in agreement on the baptism and communion question that those mentioned divided their congregations over. Schism is defined as rejection of the written word of God in order to hold a position even if the position itself is outwardly agreeable to sound doctrine. (See Section, III.)

[129] Isaiah 55:11.

Scripture to see if they are the ones to be sifted out, reproved, judged or corrected by God.

4. Only the rule in the church where leaders exercise the power of "the least of these" is sufficient for such discernment. The "greatest" are easily seduced by their greatness that any power they have is God's authorization to demand that everyone be part of their kingdom as they define it in full confidence that their kingdom must be God's Kingdom. "Why else do we have God's mandate to rule?" They ask themselves despite our Lord's repeated warning.[130]
5. In the real world, these theological battles are often fronts for the real issues which divide God's people. In both cases it is the least of these my brethren who are most likely to see through the illusion. *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, . . . "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*[131]
6. The following issues lie behind most theological disputes making them inflammatory for "to the winners go the spoils":

a. **Control of physical assets —** Low budgets make New Testament growth possible. Large budgets supporting expensive assets (buildings, conference, grounds, headquarters, mailing lists, careers etc.) are the greatest roadblocks to growth and the greatest roadblocks to the real debate of significant theological issues because they are not part of the purpose of God's people. Jesus ran the Church with a budget the size of a small bag which He intentionally entrusted to a traitor and a nonstop argument raging around Him. *His Church thrived.*

b. **Control of Spiritual Assets —** Humility makes growth possible. In an authoritarian context, any divisive issue is a personal challenge to the leader and it becomes a vote of confidence.[132] But if the leader no longer has institutional power, then there is nothing to fight over, it is impossible to remove the seal of the Holy Spirit, or take it for oneself as the result of winning a debate. This requires maturity.

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[130] Christ's standard of leadership-power being that of a servant not a master, the least, not the greatest is also Paul's standard when he was challenged and when he gave advice to aspiring pastors and leaders, I Corinthians 15 esp vs 8; Ephesians 3:15; Timothy-Titus where we find no call to discipline by means of elders convening church courts presided over by elders.

[131] James 4:1-6.

[132] II Samuel 15:4-6.

Jesus ran the Church as a servant, forcing his will and way on no one, sustained only by the Holy Spirit in His teaching, argument and ministry. *His Church thrived.*

7. The rich young ruler is the example of the Church ruled by the "greatest among you," not the least; a church ruled by its possessions not by Jesus Christ. The last 2000 years is the fate of the Rich Young followers of Jesus. What if the Church only worked with those who were willing to follow and only in groups large enough to fit into the meeting room, and budgets large enough to fit into the bag, and the bag entrusted to suspected thieves? *Could we have done worse for the last 2000 years?*

C. Those who call self-rule of hearts governed by God's law impossible are guided by one main presupposition — immature materialism and the desire for spiritual dominion over brothers and sisters in Christ is inevitable and inescapable. Or to put it another way the Curse is inescapable and will have the last word. The reality of history is, the task of the elders in the authoritarian Church always has been and always will be to control the most stuff and have the biggest following all in the best interests of the children/congregation. Those who find this assessment cynical and disagree must answer the question: "Then why is it the elders control all the stuff in the Church and control the spiritual assets of the church?" This is no cynical insult, this describes the control and command structure of all but the most destitute of organized congregations throughout history, describing especially the successful ministries today. Success is defined as the leaders in the church who control the most physical and spiritual assets.

1. If the first objection is, "No it isn't that way! These assets are indifferent, they are tools of the kingdom . . ." the point is proven. The Rich Young Ruler and the Pharisees defended their wealth and Spiritual Dominion in the same terms as they walked away amazed that Jesus could think that "things" and "Spiritual Control" were not tools for serving God. Yet in their lives they were the very things that made it impossible for them to follow Jesus.

2. The definition of the rich young ruler is the definition of the elders since 300 AD: Rich — acquiring great wealth . . . for the church of course; Ruler — firmly maintaining control of all things spiritual and material . . . for the good of the Kingdom of course; Young — dooming themselves and God's congregation to perpetual immaturity.

3. "It is not to be so among you." The real Jesus.

D. Many things may divide Christian congregations but there is only one thing that truly erases the divide between God's people and the world — to depart from the conviction that God's word is final,[133]

[133] Genesis 2:15.

and that whatever doctrine is found in Scripture must be believed and obeyed until clearer light springs from the same word.[134] Outside of the practice of this conviction, there is no light even if one's doctrines are at many points correct.[135]

1. Ecclesiastical courts of elite elders are not sources of that light, nor of preserving the unity of the faith, or God would have said so and made courts an explicit and exclusive part of an elder's job description.

a. He did not command courts be ordained and He did not make that sort of power or a job description of the elders. To the contrary He explicitly warned against that error.[136]

b. There is no historical evidence that authoritarian government preserves the unity of the faith, in fact the exact opposite is found throughout most of history.[137]

2. Believing the full authority of Scripture does not grant the same authority to one's understanding of Scripture. This fact should lead God's people to humility in the face of God's Final Truth and seek it in God's word always and not in man's decrees however true they might be. Their truth is derivative.

a. This is precisely why factions[138] in the congregation do not need to battle each other to the end of bitter division and hatred (however they mask it in zeal for Truth.)

b. The reality check is that God's Word and His power is sufficient in the days, years and centuries to come to sort error from truth.

c. Therefore, simply separate the warring factions let them see who is of the Lord.

3. As year succeeds to year God's people are to live by the serene confidence that God's word will weed through all the competing interpretations. He will sustain the true and leave the rest to wither in the thin soil by the rocky road however lovely and healthy their first flowering might have seemed.[139]

4. The discipling task of the elders is to teach the truth and embody it in such a way that the righteous are encouraged and motivated. At the same time they are to teach the truth in a way that the sinner and the heretic are convicted from the heart and turn, or being unconvinced they depart with our prayers, not our bitter enmity. Paul tells Timothy and Titus to deal with error, contempt, and sinful opposition not through courts and trials, but through sober and

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[134] Isaiah 8:20; Revelation 22:18-19.

[135] Isaiah 8:20; II Peter 1:19.

[136] Luke 22:25.

[137] Count the number of fragmented denominations in the world.

[138] I Corinthians 11:19.

[139] Matthew 13:1-23.

mature proven judgment in sound teaching lived out.[140] Failure to make ***peaceful*** division over serious error a normal part of growth and maturity has disastrous consequences.[141] Trusting an ordained elite to do this task for you has proven even more disastrous over the years. 95% of all error has come from the ordained shepherds and from the schools that train them.

5. The disciplinary task of the congregation is to determine where separation is necessary and to send forth the troubler of the congregation with the full confidence that in 25 to 100 to 300 years (sometimes by the end of the week) the world will know who spoke truly for Christ according to the word of God. It is for God's congregation to live in the fullness of what they by faith understand, and to pray for further understanding and grow. It is by that fruitful growth that God grants increase to His people and weeds their sterile enemies out.[142]
6. To send forth or to start a congregation over a disputed term, doctrine or practice is not schismatic but rather a good and healthy way to remain civil and in prayer each side for the other, trusting God to sustain His word His way, however stiff the opposition; and in the meantime, to remain focused on the task God has given to fill the earth and subdue it undistracted by vain disputes.
7. Those who are older reading this know that these are by far the most Utopian passages in this Handbook. They require maturity to know how not to bite and devour one another on the one hand and how not to be unequally yoked on the other. There is no handbook that can replace good judgment of the spiritually mature.
8. The Church awaits their discipleship and has been waiting for 2,000 years now.

E. Though Authoritarian government can accomplish many good

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[140] I Timothy 4:6-16, After 3 chapters of different sorts of error and opposition Timothy needed to charge or confront, Paul outlines how opponents of the Truth are to be confronted. Titus also, in each instance where Paul discusses what to look for in an elder, or how Titus should deal with the error on Crete, Paul says the following sorts of things, "teach what accords with sound doctrine, . . . sobriety, . . . self-control, . . . exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you . . . be ready for every good work, . . . to speak evil of no one, . . . avoid quarreling, . . . be gentle, . . . show perfect courtesy toward all people." These sorts of things are throughout the book, yet not a word on trials, examinations, or discipline. Even, "have nothing more to do with them" Is not disciplinary shunning, but rather setting the troublers of the faith off to start a congregation that is ruled by their ideas and see if God would bless them. In the meantime, focus on what builds up God's people and not bog down in endless pilpul. Discipline is not mentioned as one of the discipleship tools of elders, not there, not to the Corinthians.

[141] Revelation 2-3.

[142] Genesis 1:27-28; 9:27; 15:1-6; 32:12; Exodus 20:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:9-10; Daniel 2:44-45; Matthew 28:18-20.

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things, in the end it is insufficient to produce a people able to bear the weight of Glory which God recreated them in Christ Jesus to shine forth.[143] Correct government including what is proposed here cannot nullify the limits of the 2nd commandment as if practicing the proper forms of self-government will produce godly people capable of self-control. Government, like godliness, like true worship, like love from a pure heart, is not the result of proper technique, covenantal standards, liturgy or ritual. It is the work of the Holy Spirit through the discipleship of the Church which creates a godly people capable of self-government, true worship, pure hearts and love.

1. The Authority and Power of leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ is not the power to set policy and police it. This power is exclusively the power of the Holy Spirit to speak through His word to each member of the congregation *including but not limited to those who lead*. Leadership is not to be submitted to in general, but situation by situation where the congregation submits or when not submitting, like Baalam's Ass, they correct the leaders.
2. Any leader or member who is not living out, *"Lest a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die it abides alone, but if it does . . ."*[144] will take disputes personally. By contrast, service is the basis of the Authority and power of the congregation and is the proper heritage of all who are in Christ Jesus from the least of these to the Greatest. *"For behold, I am among you a Servant."*[145]
3. The Servant is not Greater than His Master nor may he rule the church as if he were. These matters are more fully developed in Chapters 0 and 0.

[143] II Corinthians 3:16-18.

[144] John 12:24.

[145] Luke 22:27; Mark 10:33-35.

VI. RULES? OF FELLOWSHIP? … SORT OF.

A. Upper Room Rules could be summarized in the slogan of the actor, Crocodile Dundee, describing the Out Back Steak House: "No Rules, Just Right." In the Upper Room and in general, in the ministry of Jesus Christ and His Apostles God's word gives us a great deal of information about how to conduct ourselves in the household of God. Yet the entire Bible is devoid of anything resembling rules and bylaws. Finally, at the close of the New Testament, because there were problems at Corinthian Paul tells them how to act toward each other in their gatherings. What is disquieting to the modern reader, or should be, is that what Paul describes is utterly alien to even Pentecostal churches much less the more traditional denominations. Jesus at the end of his earthly ministry; then Peter at the end of the New Testament Apostolic ministry; both defined order in the house of God negatively (much like the 10 commandments actually, mostly don't do this and don't do that.) What each of them said is, ***not*** to rule by exercising authority over others. Positively, Jesus defined authority by pointing to common examples rather than a definition or a rationalistic explanation. He pointed to common examples of legally authoritative people, such as the master of the house, or the elder brother, or the "great ones." He didn't say don't abuse authority the way a master might be abusive. In contrast to legally authoritative rulers, He pointed to a servant, "look I am among you as a servant." Peter went so far as to define the rule of an Elder, a Shepherd and an Overseer positively as ruling by example only(!!) **not** by directing with organizationally or legally binding authority. Peter used the same word as Jesus for Authority and was no doubt remembering His teaching in the upper room and at least four or five times during His earthly ministry. This is not a side issue for Jesus it might be his most commonly returned to theme in the gospels. Relying on organizational authority was, as far as he was concerned, the death of his kingdom.[146] ***In short, Jesus understood that the power to get people to do what you want them to do, lies in one or***

[146] Matthew 16; Matthew 20:26; Luke 22:27; Mark 10:43; Matthew 23 The woes and judgments of this chapter against the religious and political leaders of God's people, begin with treating them like authorities as if they had some sort of divine advantage over being a believer and follower of God . . . any authority even in the church is woe if you attribute divine authority of office to them that the simplest believer does not also have. Mark 10:13-16; Matthew 18:15-20. It is the congregation that judges all things. Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:2-4. In each of these passages the question of who is the greatest is provoked by Jesus speaking of His death. This is not a side issue, it is the central issue of the apostles and for Jesus, it is the issue of who they are and how they are to carry on organizationally when he is gone. Every time it comes up "Who is the greatest?" Jesus responds the same way. It is inconceivable that the last 2,000 years of the ministry of the greatest is the fulfillment of His idea which he repeated as many times as any other thing he taught.

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the other of two mutually exclusive sources. 1- the power to punish and reward them based on their performance, or 2- the power you have while hanging on a cross to set the example. Jesus introduced the ideas which guided that first generation, so simple, so related to the root of their existence that there was almost no need for explanation, and the explanation that was given is so alien to human, classical, experience that for 2,000 years after His resurrection and His apostle's death, it never occurred to the Church that Jesus and the Apostles did anything other than endorse Gentile power — business as usual. Jesus had no historical precedent to draw on other than his order established in Creation and expounded on by His law which notably lacks the establishment of an institutional executive power. We are willing to be directed by others who believe this "central government" theme really is in the Scripture. But until Scripture establishes such a crucial form of government, this is a first draft idea of how to conduct ourselves in the Household of God. It is regrettably wordy it should be brief and pithy I have not grown in my understanding to do that yet. However the following ideas hopefully outline this handbook in a way that is useful to a congregation and does not create a rule where God grants freedom

1. **There is only one final rule and authority — God's word.** We can disagree on what it might say, and how we interpret or apply the classical definitions of the faith and we may legitimately divide on that basis. But there is only one true point of schism that cuts us off from the possibility of correction humanly speaking and that is the person who says, "God's word is not final." He has stepped out of any circle of faith in God, regardless of anything else he might say. He is not irredeemable, he is outside on the matter on which he exempts himself from God's word.[147]
2. **There is only one final authority for each individual to interpret God's word and that is the Holy Spirit speaking in the center of each believer's life.** *God does not make the believer's judgment an infallible authority*, but He does make it final in respect to other human authorities power to coerce and He promises to judge with blessing or cursing the conclusions of the heart as well as those who refuse to respect it.
3. **There is One Church** and all who call upon the name of the Lord through all time are a part of that Church for their Blessing or if false, for their Cursing.
4. **The church may be divided into an infinite number of fellowships, or congregations, (ekklesia),** who may or may not be associated with each other in as many different ways. Any Christian is primarily a part of Christ and is only secondarily a part of those particular fellowships and should be welcome in all fellowships by simple identification with them.

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[147] Genesis 2:17.

5. **These fellowships are where God's people freely mature to a love of the brethren, in the unity and bond of peace, and in holiness being able to distinguish good from evil as mature adults and not be blown about by every wind of doctrine.**
6. **These fellowships are led by leaders gifted by the Spirit to teach, heal, prophesy, pastorally minister with the power of servants to enforce their word with only one goal which is to equip each member of the Church with a mature love for each other, unity in peace and discernment of the winds of doctrine and proper judgment.**
7. **Nothing a fellowship does by way of activity, teaching, preaching, fellowship, training or organization especially anything the leaders may do, may be permitted to replace the work of the Holy Spirit or the word of God or to mask His absence or His rejection of our lampstand, or to replace His still small voice in each believer speaking through His word.**
8. **It is track record, character and sound doctrine not courts and binding judgments that characterize those gifted to lead and those who follow them.** The fullness of God's care, love, word and Spirit must flow through the fellowship, teaching, daily life, doctrine, discipline, exhortation and all dealings with each other and the world. Any activity lacking this becomes a mockery of what God intended it to be.[148] Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus show that how we act in worship and in all things of life is to reflect sound doctrine, application of God's word to all things, patience, kindness, forbearance, in short the sort of demeanor you would expect of one who is crucified on your behalf.[149]
9. **Because division is normal, each member is discipled to mature discernment and love, therefore dividing over doctrine should be simple, well defined and not bitter.** There is no need to go to trial for issues that are well known and public whether they concern things we believe, teach, or do. Is someone teaching a heresy? Let the elders use discussions with them to disciple members of the congregation to grow in discernment and understanding. The goal of the discussion should be the clarification of sound doctrine and its differences with the error. In the end if it is impossible to reconcile or live in harmony, then the two groups separate and pray that God would establish his truth confident that God can do it apart from our bitterness, wrath and rancor. The same for ministries or programs that some believe should be a function of the fellowship but others do not. Let them peaceably define the issues, see if there is ground for continuing together in the same fellowship, and if not let them depart in peace and attend to the matter they find so important, and God will sort out who is and who is not His. Is

[148] I Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:22ff; Ephesians 6:11ff.

[149] Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 3:10; Matthew 16:2-27.

someone caught up in sin? If they will not be corrected and repent, but instead cling to it, then they can peaceably depart along with all who believe their sin not to be worthy of separation to start their own congregation where such lenience is practiced and we separate from them that they might learn not to sin. Where elders have done their job, the congregation can handle all things with no need of trials and secret examinations. Churches run by "fathers who know best" exist only because those in authority have failed to raise up their congregation to be what Jesus Christ died for us all to be not just an elite few.

10. **God's perspective on all things should be as natural a point of our conversation with each other and with all men as talking about their grandchildren is natural for grandparents, not something that requires study or constraint.** The traditional term for this is witnessing, but it is far more than the thin gruel of courageously applying a few apologetic tricks in a conversation with an unbeliever. It is the fullness of an overflowing heart "being filled with the Spirit and speaking among ourselves with Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord." This was not written to direct special times of worship, but to direct our normal interaction with others in life.
11. **When an unbeliever comes into our fellowship or we enter into theirs, we expect that the Holy Spirit will show him our love for each other,** our sharpening each other, teaching in love, exhortation, and intelligent conversation concerning all things of life and just plain having fun together because there is no one we would rather be with. The joy of the Lord should be our evident strength.
12. **In the matter of gathering together with the saints, there are no rules which though giving the appearance of godliness, and are often what the godly do, that can replace the heart of searching attendance on God and service to each other.** Therefore, there are no rules of attendance, no rules for paying attention, regular seating, enforced discipline to enjoin respect, punish disrespect, or submission.[150] Each person comes and talks to whomever he will whenever he will. Any respect he might give to a speaker or singer, or prophecy or reading, or in our modern setting, any audio visual or recording, or any other activity or conversation is the respect and attention welling up from God's work in his heart to respect the speaker or the listener — or failing that, to act with rude, calloused

[150] There is no Scripture giving anyone power or authority to enforce these things or examples of discipline based on them. But Scripture is not merely silent. It is full and running over of examples of how to deal with problems of this nature. It simply rejects discipline of an ordained elder over others as the way to deal with anything. Even Paul did not pull the elder or Apostle card in an authoritative fashion to require any recognition or respect beyond that which they were willing to give from a full heart. Read I & II Corinthians and you will see that he draws back from using his credentials to require that others recognize him.

or ignorant disregard of one another. There is no replacement for what God does among us with mere rules of decorum so men can control others. Let everything be chaos before we commit the idolatry of enforcing by rules what is only to be an inward upwelling of the Holy Spirit in all we say and do together. Let every speaker beware that there is no replacement for the Holy Spirit by attempting to govern by the rules of men how others should receive their word, song, exhortation, rebuke, teaching or sermon. If the Holy Spirit does not move in the heart of those there to grant them attention, love and respect, or conviction then there is no replacing it with the social pressures of the traditions of men or a pulpit with a skilled orator. The problem may lie in the congregation or the speaker, but enforcing rules only obscures where the work needs to be done to grow.

13. **Should disorder be typical of any group it simply means that they are too immature to discern the body of Christ or rightly examine themselves. The work is cut out for any who lead them to teach them how to see Christ in each other instead of their own selfish appetites.** For this reason, it is vital that those who mentor them not short-circuit the work of the Holy Spirit by finding artificial means of covering over their immaturity by enforcing rules of men that would give the appearance of discerning the body, or decency or order when the reality is that it is the threat of the leader that creates the piety making it by definition false piety, a stench.[151]
14. **Leaders, then, lead by the power of the Holy Spirit who fixes the eyes and attention of their hearers and those whom they mentor[152] on them, their teaching and the example of that**

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[151] Isaiah 29:10; Isaiah 65:5.

[152] The Biblical word "discipleship" has become a jargon insider word for Christians who have lost all ministry to, and contact with, the issues of life as are common to all mankind around them. However, the vision of discipling others, rather than ruling over them set ablaze by the Reformation in 1500 and by much of the Anabaptist example from the time they first objected to the priestly invasion in the early Church with their theatres, rituals and elite priests. This vision has already transformed the secular world who have themselves grown in wisdom, and power that self-government brings them. They have applied Biblical Principles of discipleship, calling it "mentoring", but the non-binding direction of those who are guided, helped, taught, rebuked and exhorted by older wiser and experienced leaders is simply the discipling methodology of Jesus Christ turned loose in the earth leading to the broad decentralization of all organizations except those from the pit of hell where central planning is still the ideal. It is much of the reason why more and more Christians are turning away from the organized Ministry Industrial Complex kept alive in top down government appropriate to an age begun in Genesis 3:16 that God is bringing to a close by the very success of His Son and the Apostles He chose, and through their ministry and teaching and the Reformation, God's people began to apply the teaching which changes even the unbelievers around them and their culture who now have let go the sleeve of the believers because they see no evidence that God is

teaching in their lives.

15. **Leaders are singled out, ordained, advance in influence power and stature with God and men by their years of sound ministry, character, witness and ability to mentor others, in no need of the power to punish or force others to attend their words, undistracted** by administration of buildings, budgets, theatrical performances and programs which must be maintained on a regular basis (today three or 4 per week is a minimum expectation of most congregations and the organization of bureaucratic leaders who run them). There is no reason a single person shouldn't teach publicly each week in our gatherings, but if this persists after 2 or three years, he should be calling his effectiveness as a teacher into question if there are not dozens of others gifted, qualified, and trained to teach and preach effectively with him. **The gifts of any leaders are the gifts to empower others with their words and life**.
16. **Those they bless can and should share of what God has bountifully provided for them financially with these leaders who should be gainfully employed until the quality of their ministry frees them and the continued quality of their ministry and mentoring of God's people motivates them to strive harder than before to put themselves out of a job**. A salary coming from an organization of leaders purporting to represent the church, seriously jeopardizes the freedom of God's people and goes beyond what Paul told Timothy to do.
17. **God promised growth. Division should be a normal part of life.** God promised that the Holy Spirit speaking through His word would cut to the heart all men who are introduced to His people and numbers should grow to the extent that on a regular basis the group outgrows its meeting place and must divide.
18. **Where growth is not happening we do not pass judgment on others, but rather we are on our face before God to examine ourselves to see if our conversation hope, demeanor, word, deed, and prayer have become tasteless salt —** introspective, or worldly, self-centered, small group centered, theologically technical so as to speak in theological tongues, or Christian jargon, or Latin as far as most people are concerned,[153] or in any other way devoid of the issues of life. The Christian congregation should be discussing the issues of all of life as they and any member of the community

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with them, only the artificial appearances of wizards of Oz to create a pretense, of order, worship and the work of the Holy Spirit through organizational sham and show. Something Jesus Christ repeatedly told them not to resort to, the authority of the gentiles who love to be called the blessing of the people, the benefactors. (put all scripture verses in here in which Jesus said the least come first, and note they all followed arguments of the disciples on who should lead which followed his teaching on his coming death.)

[153] I Corinthians 14:5-13.

outside their fellowship is living it, because we are living that life with them, a part of their culture until they become a part of ours. We are the most important part of their culture for we are leading it by example and teaching them to take the next step toward glory beyond the steps already taken to get to the glory they now experience but take for granted as if it has always been normal and merely the fruit of common secular sense. Where this Spirit-guided conversation dies is where those who hear us no longer hear the issues of life and rightly they should find nothing else that would attract them any more than dung encrusted salt attracts anything but dung beetles.

19. **For Jesus the door for anyone to walk away was always wide open and the encouragement not to let the screen door hit the departing one in the fanny was always evident.** Staying or leaving is not the business of any leader in the Church. Were they casting out demons in His name? Let them. Were they rejecting Him like a pack of Samaritans? No fire and brimstone needs be called for. Did their dead need burying? Did their wives, family and children come before following Jesus? You have made your decision, go tend them. Were they preaching the Gospel for the wrong reason? Rejoice. Yes, command them to come and follow Christ . . . but let them go, there is no binding them. Does their wealth beckon them? Goodbye. Is their doctrine false, then they will only be as successful in misleading your people from the least of them to the greatest as you have failed to teach them how to love what is true, reject what is evil, and judge all things by God's word. Are they thieves? Put them in charge of the bag, the budget. That is what the God of the Universe did when He was here.
20. **"Only you have the words of eternal life." Is Doubting Thomas' summary of the only reason anyone has to stay in fellowship with Jesus Christ and His people.** The issues of life that attract to us all men, women and children from all walks and stations of life, are summarized by this saying, it is what it means to know Christ and Him Crucified only — That knowledge pertains to every topic that might conceivably be brought up. "If I be lifted up I draw all men to myself." "I determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified." These are not an expression of how limited our conversation must be, but how comprehensive the Cross of Christ is encompassing the entire earth of human reality.

B. The Marks of the True Church. Bring us back to our first and only principle — everything depends on the conviction in each believer of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word. That is the answer to the question you are shouting at this book in your heart: "You mean your vain permissive idea of Church would do nothing to stop a heretic, the immoral, a deceiver of God's people a defiler of the Table?" Before you tear your Tunic and quote Calvin, "Yet unless the Word of God is rightly preached and taught, the sacraments

rightly administered, and church discipline is faithfully exercised, there is no **true church** present." Know that this Handbook describes the fulfillment of each of these three signs of the True Church as Jesus taught them, not replacing His teaching with the gentile traditions of men. This question we get from most critics is based on the idea that discipline and order comes from a group of people who have been set apart with the unique spiritual power to control the congregation and through that control to protect them from error, sin and schism. These critics have successfully convinced most Christians throughout the millennia that the only alternative to their Gen 3:16 authority and power is chaos and anarchy. Against them, Jesus and His Apostles said that this was false and demonstrated true authority and power.

1. ***Where is "The word of God is rightly preached?"*** How many times did Jesus frame His teaching on the Pharisees with "do as they say . . . but"? For Jesus, correctly understanding and explaining God's word and arguing the details of interpretation was only the first rung of the ladder. Living it from the heart in Spirit and in Truth is not just a second step, it is what the 2nd commandment and the 10th Commandment and the first and greatest commandment look forward to — the transformed heart that never confuses the best this world can do with a relationship to God. The exemplary walk in that relationship, founded and built in sound doctrine is what makes someone a leader — they become elders, shepherds, overseers, pastors, preachers and teachers — producing fruit that would last. This fruit is the people of God brought to maturity by the discipleship of the leaders, whom Jesus promised would do greater things than He,[154] which means that they would certainly exceed those who discipled them. The mature success of those we teach is the proof or mark that God's word is rightly taught. The mere fact that men after 2000 years of thinking they are teaching and refining our understanding of God's word still to this day fear that a life-time of ministry can be swept away by heresy, or immorality without their constant protective discipline is merely proof from their own mouth that they never got past the first stage and are companion to the Pharisees. Rightly teaching God's word produces Ephesians 4 Christians who 1) Love each other and 2) Maintain the unity of the faith in the bonds of peace; 3) Commit to holiness; 4) Judge all things 5) Discern True from False, not blown around by winds of doctrine; 6) Draw all men to Christ. If this sort of Christian is not typical of a congregation, then regardless of the accuracy of teaching, or the vigor of worship, God's word was not rightly taught nor was God rightly worshiped. "Do as they say . . . But" applies to any teacher as much as to any Pharisee. Where God's Holy Spirit is

[154] John 14:12-14, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

not filling and transforming those who are mentored then those who mentor — the "shepherds" "overseers" "elders" and "preachers of the word" — are merely holding those names by virtue of some organization's office and are elders, etc. in name only, not in Spirit and in Truth. The word is rightly preached only where the hearers become mature believers in no need of the teacher to govern them with discipline. For Jesus the proof was always in the banquet, never in the claims of those who said they were chefs. "Come taste and see."

2. ***Where are "the sacraments rightly administered?"*** Only where each individual Christian is mentored to discern for themselves the body of Christ both in the congregation around them as well as in the elements of communion.[155] The Sacraments are not rightly administered where elders play the role of nursemaids to congregations who are perpetually children not merely year after year but generationally, never competent to examine themselves, as God's word makes clear, but instead are required to submit to the examination of the elders, something God not only never said but directly stated the opposite, **"Let *each man* examine *himself* to see if he is worthy."**[156] For 2,000 years this task is usurped by priests whose descendants today argue the unfitness of the congregation to examine themselves for fear of being swept away by error or immorality. If it is indeed their claim that the sacraments need an elite to guard them rather than faithful partakers sufficiently mature to guard their own participation then more than any other accusation, it is this defense of their authority out of their own mouths, which condemns their own fitness to be shepherds and overseers. The Sacraments are rightly administered where the teachers of the Church have raised up a mature congregation capable of uniting in communion, love of the brethren, holiness and maturity to judge all things,[157] including themselves and the Table and body of our Lord.[158]

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[155] I Corinthians 11:22, 27 & 28, both the body of Christ and the body of believers is to be discerned in the Lord's table. But He says more about who the examining authority is to be in vs. 28 "***Everyone*** ought to examine ***themselves*** before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. [29]For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves." It is not merely that there is no reference in the New Testament to elder examinations, there is the positive command for this to be the power and authority of each Christian who will be personally held accountable, vs. 30 by God Himself. Moses was denied access to the Promised land for striking the Rock when God did not command it. The same goes for striking His Bride when God does not command it.

[156] I Corinthians 11:18; II Corinthians 12:3

[157] I Corinthians 2:15.

[158] It is important to be clear. This is not a judgment we bring against any who labor in the word and prayer as overseers and pastors in traditionally governed churches. Rather it is comparing their defense of their power to the testimony

a. ***Where is "Church discipline faithfully exercised?"*** There is not one verse in the New Testament singling out the apostles, elders, overseers, shepherds, preachers, prophets or any organization of these gifts and callings to possess special spiritual powers of administering the judgment and discipline of the Church. The simplest believer also possesses these spiritual powers. Therefore, to the extent that such an elite corps of self-authenticating leaders takes all authority to itself, it is self-evident that discipline cannot be rightly exercised. The Teaching of Christ and his Apostles is not silent on this point, leaving the Church to follow the general equity of what makes sense to them. Scripture clearly and boldly says the exact opposite. The discipline of the Church lies with a mature people of God unmediated by special priests.[159] They attain this maturity through the mentoring from those gifted to lead, to disciple others.[160] All traditional pastors and elders know that they do not have time for everyone and it grieves them deeply. What simple obedience to God produces is a real solution to the limited time any one person has however gifted. When every member of the congregation is matured, these mature believers are one-on-one with a potentially troubled person years before it would become an issue that might require discipline, or even receive the notice of "the authorities" as a problem. Each potentially troubled member runs into dozens, hundreds, of brothers and sisters helping them stay off that road. The problem we have picturing what God can do is realizing that it really makes a difference when He tells us which side of the boat to casting our nets even when it makes no sense to us or the fathers who always cast on the other side, or believed it irrelevant, instead of listening to what he clearly says. Only leaders who devote their lives to mentoring their flock into mature adult believers who mentor all around them can expect the fruit of Ephesians 4 fellowships. This growing multitude personally one-on-one redirects the lives of those they know and love. This is the first step of disciplinary ministry in Matthew 18:15-17 and it is to be normal and take place from the earliest experience from all in the congregation to all.[161] This can only happen when leaders see it as

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of Scripture. For us to go farther than this observation would be to commit the very sin we would be accusing them of. Scripture is sufficient for those with eyes to see.

[159] Matthew 18:15-20. In I Corinthians 5:2 Paul rebukes them for not having disciplined the adulterer already and joins with their judgment. It was not necessary for him to be there in order for them to initiate that judgment because he rebukes them for not taking action themselves. His joining them in Spirit was not because of a theological or ecclesiastical necessity, but because of their immaturity and reluctance to do what was in their power and responsibility and authority to do.

[160] The Ephesians 4:11-14 gifts are given to build up the church, not those gifted, into ministers.

[161] Studying the One-another (ἀλλήλων) commands gives an entirely different

their only task not to be the judges (that is, usurpers) or administrators or building managers and budget lords (that is, distracted from their purpose and call waiting on various important tables)[162] but rather to be with their people at all times in all places leading them to maturity in their faith. Within a few years, these same people matured by the exemplary[163] ministry of elders who teach, oversee, and mentor their flock turn into people who can guard themselves against all winds of doctrine, can nurture those around them applying God's word in all things, and can maturely judge when one they have all known intimately goes astray and needs further correction having no need of power based offices and tribunals beyond the ministry of the congregation itself. If this task requires exclusive ministry of elders — and today it is the elders who make the argument that this is precisely what they are needed for — then out of their own mouths they confess clearly that their ministry has not produced such a congregation, and that they have flatly rejected the clear teaching of God concerning discipline which is the province of an Ephesians 4 and Matthew 18:15-17 congregation which they were charged to produce. Having turned their backs on Scripture they have replaced it with the exclusive power of elite elders and after 2,000 years have nothing but ashes to show for it though they themselves are saved.

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picture of Matthew 18 which is mistakenly pressed into a format for legal process. Instead Matthew 18 is a structure for how to submit to each other. That first step of Matthew 18:15 is summarized by — Ephesians 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ." This ministry of all Christians personally to each other, one on one is called for 100 times in 94 NT verses. Legal process is the best you can do when elders fail to disciple God's flock and turn instead to buildings, management, Budget supervision, depending on celebrity leaders skilled at maintaining a few theatrical services each week. The impoverished congregation is left with people for whom there is nothing else to do but discipline them when they get off the path. What the New Testament teaches, however is very different. Biblical ministry means never having to go to court. But if you do the congregation is more than sufficient to the task because they have been dealing with every issues long before it is a problem Consider the following Scriptures concerning things we do with and for one another:.

The Unity of the Church: Mark 9:50; John 6:43; James 4:11; 5:9; Romans 12:6; 15:5,7; I Corinthians 11:33; Galatians 5:15, 26; Ephesians 4:2,25,32; Colossians 3:9,13; I Thessalonians 5:15 James 5:16; John 6:43.

Love the your Brothers and Sisters: John 13:34; 15:12,17; Romans 12:10; 13:8; 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 5:11; Hebrews 10:24; I Peter 1:22; I John 3:11; 4:7,11; II John 5; Galatians 5:15,23,26; Ephesians 4:2; I Peter 5:14;

In Humility Serve each other: John 13:14; Romans 12:10; 12:16; Galatians 5:13; 6:2; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3; James 5:16; I Peter 4:9; 5:5;

[162] Acts 6:3-4, Ephesians 4:11-12; I Peter 5:3.

[163] I Peter 5:1-3; Ephesians 4. I Corinthians 6:1-12

PART TWO:

THE NATURE of BIBLICAL POWER

I did not start with these ideas. After doing the Biblical study in the first VI Sections I wanted to see if I could express a coherent expression of Kingdom Power. Traditionally it has been the force granted to leaders to control those who do not want to submit to them. This power Jesus identifies as gentile. These three Essays need editing, but they look at the question of Legitimate Power and Authority.

So what is Kingdom power?

It is God backing up the word, and organizational plans of a leader not permitting them to fall to the ground, on the one hand, and the people of God willingly submitting to them as unto the Lord on the other hand.

VII. DISCIPLESHIP — KINGDOM, POWER, GLORY.

NOTE: ***Love is the power of the Executive branch of Christian Self-government for one who governs himself by God's law.*** More than mere obedience or rational analysis is involved. God is a lover and wants his people to love Him and each other. In self-government the analogy to the executive branch, is the human expression of God's love. Our Executive capacity is that aspect in us that, "delights to ***do*** your will O Lord." That is "Glad when they said to me let us ***go*** to the House of the Lord." But there is a more intense abandonment to love that is also reflected, that cries out to God, "Kiss me and kiss me again, for your love is sweeter than wine. How pleasing is your fragrance; your name is like the spreading fragrance of scented oils. No wonder all the young women love you! Take me with you; come, let's run! The king has brought me into his bedroom! . . . You are as exciting, my darling, as a mare among Pharaoh's stallions. How lovely are your cheeks; your earrings set them afire! How lovely is your neck, enhanced by a string of jewels. We will make for you earrings of gold and beads of silver. The king is lying on his couch, enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume. My lover is like a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts." "This then I have against you, that you have left your first love." "This is a great mystery but I speak of Christ and His Church." Maturity is more than ethical knowledge. Maturity is more than wise judgment. Maturity is more than application or **merely** doing what God's word says is right. Might not a skillful passive aggressive do this much?

Not less, but **more**. Maturity is more than merely years of experience which build judgment and discernment. Maturity is all these things but more, it is glorying in that which builds up and advances each other's gifts to the fullest. Lovers never put their agenda, their dreams, their own pleasure and ecstasy first. The executive authority of the believer is that love which serves. First always comes the gifts calling and agenda of God in the lives of those ministered to and served. This is the environment that we are advancing — the Kingdom of God to the fullest. The days are over of preferring this person's power over that person's submission. Those are the halfway measures of an authoritarian past. Leaders are those who make other's gifts so effective that their beloved ranks above them. The leader says with John the Baptist, you must increase but I must decrease. ***Love is the power of the Executive branch of government in one who governs himself by God's law.***

A. The only Organization of any significance to Discipleship is the Kingdom of God; the only Power available to a disciple is the power of God; The only purpose of the elder is to equip those whom God transforms into creatures worthy to bear the weight of Glory in His New Creation; the only standard to judge is the Word of God; the only one empowered to judge is the individual for himself, and God will judge him based on that.

B. The only call of any leader in the Church is to disciple God's people to full maturity, not a co-dependence on the leaders, not an administration of their life and fellowship.

1. ***A LEADER HAS NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN DISCIPLESHIP*** to distract or divide his time such as buildings, salaries, fund-raising, staff recruitment, trials of church members he barely knows (needing to try them ***because*** he barely knows them) and all the administrative details of the modern council of elders.[164]

2. ***A LEADER HAS NO OTHER POWER TO CONTROL GOD'S PEOPLE, OTHER THAN THE HOLY SPIRIT*** speaking through His word written on their heart and the hand of God upholding the word of those charged with the oversight of God's house.[165] Yet for 2,000 years "oversight" and "shepherding" have not been defined by Jesus', "Feed my sheep," "Do not exercise authority over them as the gentiles do. . . . I am among you not as a master but as a servant," or by Peter, "Not as one exercising authority but as an example,"[166] Instead by authority to exercise power and control over God's people, the precise opposite of the exact words recorded in Scripture.

3. ***A LEADER HAS NO OTHER KINGDOM*** to advance than one which is advanced by the executive power of lovers pouring

[164] Acts 6:2,4.

[165] I Timothy 3:14-15; Luke 22:25ff; I Peter 1:3.

[166] John 21:16; Luke 20:25-27; I Peter 5:1-3.5-17.

themselves out for their beloved.[167] It is the power of God speaking through His word, and the process whereby His people are made fit to bear the weight of Glory God designed them to sustain individually and corporately.[168]

4. ***A LEADER HAS NO OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCE*** than Christians who have benefited from his service and ministry.[169] Whenever there is an organization of leaders within the congregation who create salaried and career tracks for themselves, all who are called and paid by this organization will serve the organization.[170] They will call that organization "The Church" promote its legitimacy by declaring it the sole representative of the people, (if protestant) or of heaven itself (if Catholic or Episcopal or Orthodox) but in either case, they will grant that organization the powers Jesus Christ conveyed exclusively to His people. By Contrast with the word of God, Only Jesus Christ represents His people to God, only Jesus Christ is affirmed as their priest by Heaven. If you sit back and let them represent you then you are following a paid priest of the organization of leaders.
5. ***A LEADER HAS NO OTHER DEFINITION THAN A SERVANT WHO EQUIPS OTHERS.*** Elders, defined by God, do not seek out week after week the front of a theatre where they can in the name of teaching hold their congregation in thrall; they do not lower themselves to seek the affirmation, certification and the power of an organization to back them up when God or the people will not; They rely on no Book of Church Order to give them legal standing and protect the congregation from their abuse of power (they have no power to abuse); They are not actors employed to reenact the rituals of the faith and teach as if they alone are the celebrities of the Church.[171] The Elder's definition of ministry is . . . and it is ***only*** . .

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[167] Luke 9:23; Mark 8:34; Matthew 16:24; and any other way than the cross, called Satanic, Matthew 16:22-23. Yet the Church is defined by leaders who control and then call their "control" "service". Megenoito.

[168] II Corinthians 4;

[169] I Corinthians 9:3-14; I Timothy 5:17.

[170] Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:21.

[171] Pastor, I am not attacking you. I am not accusing you of celebrity. I know that in your heart you abhor celebrity status. I am asking you to step back and look at yourself, every Sunday, YOU are the paid center of the attention of your entire congregation. EVERY Sunday. Every Sunday. Every Sunday for how many years now have YOU been the center of attention no matter what you say or do, YOU climb onto the paid center of the stage and YOU are the paid center of attention. Every Sunday, Every Sunday, and it will only be you, until you retire or take a more successful larger stage with progressively larger lights. You are not the center? Stop, look at where you stand? Look at what they cannot do without your and your elder's permission. They only partake of the Lord's table if you and your elders grant them access. They only join if you grant them union. They only depart if you write them a letter of dismissal and good standing. This is the structure of celebrity and power. I only ask you to look at yourself through

. a ministry of ***Witness***, ***Word***, ***Prayer*** and ***Example***:

a. **Ministry of Witness —** The Apostles defined themselves as witnesses in God's court, the Church, never as special judges or bailiffs or policemen in that court beyond what any other Christian might be, no special court office beyond witness. Acts 1:8, 21-22. Cite any verse to the contrary.

b. **Ministry of the Word —** The Apostles specifically rejected all administrative or organizational responsibilities even the organization of the care of widows and orphans (how much more the hundreds of administrative and organizational responsibilities of the modern church which do not come close to the importance of caring for widows and orphans, James 1.) They **defined** themselves as ministers of the word, whose single task is to be sure that each member in their care understands from the heart and from the member's own understanding of God's-Word-Directed judgment what God says about the world and what they should do in the earth. Acts 6:4, Ephesians 4:7-16.

c. **Ministry of Prayer —** The Apostles specifically rejected all administrative or organizational responsibilities even the organization and care of widows and orphans (how much more the hundreds of administrative and organizational responsibilities of the modern church). They devoted themselves to the only power that could make their ministry of the Word effective in those they discipled, **Prayer**. Acts 6:4; Ephesians 1:18-23. God would uphold their word or it would fall to the ground. God would answer their prayer or not. In that first generation we can find no evidence that they resorted to a gentile's organizational office to uphold their word. There is no New Testament example of institutional apostolic power.

d. **The Ministry of Example —** At the end of his full life of Apostolic Ministry, Peter reflects on the only means an elder has to accomplish the discipling task God has put before him in I Peter 5. Peter defines the power the elders/shepherds/overseers have to rule over their flock. Specifically, in verses 1-2, he calls their task a shepherding, a ruling, and an overseeing, task. Then in verse 3, he specifically defines shepherding, oversight, and rule of the flock in the words Jesus spoke at the end of His ministry, Peter repeats them at the end of his own ministry — the nature of the power of the shepherd and overseer he and Jesus were speaking of is described in the words Jesus chose "The master sits at the table to [empowered to run the household], I am among you as a servant." Peter, like Jesus, specifically denies the legitimacy of any special organizational,

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dispassionate eyes and instead of shrugging and asking, "How else could we do it?" Fall on your face before God and ask, "how else can I do it." And then open your eyes and find that way that takes you out of the center of attention. With every temptation He provides a way of escape.

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institutional disciplinary powers to carry out the task of overseer and shepherd, "You elders, do ***not*** exercise ***authority*** over the flock, ***rather*** be an ***example*** to them." Κατακυριεύοντες "exercise authority," is the same word intensified (Κατα) Jesus used in Matthew 20:25, Mark 10:42; Luke 22:25 (κυριεύουσιν). It does not mean an unwarranted abuse of authority, which "lording it over" conveys in English. It simply means the proper authority any master has over his house, any governor has over his region, or any person has over his things. It means the heretofore legitimate disciplinary power a leader has to require that his way be followed. With Jesus, Peter directly contrasts leaders with organizational power as over against Church leaders who are servant-***examples***. Like Him.

e. You will search the New Testament Scriptures in vain to find either an example or a specific teaching that lifts the elder above the congregation with such an office of administrative powers which the congregation lacks, or confers to him as priestly representative. Even the least esteemed among you exercise these powers as their birthright.[172]

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[172] The two notable examples which defenders of Authoritarian Church officers appeal to most commonly to prove such authority of an elder's office are —

1) **I Corinthians 11, the drunks at the Lord's Table.** Read that passage enough times until you can finally say what it says: 1 — No elder is appealed to by Paul, to either examine the drunks or anyone else to either see if they are worthy of the table or to suspend them from the table. 2 — Paul specifically tells us who is empowered to examine even drunks before communion: the individuals themselves getting ready to partake, including the drunks. Read it until you can finally repeat what it actually says without importing your own theories and calling them God's. Paul did not credit the failures at Corinth to the failure of elders, nor to the absence of elders, nor does he empower elders here or anywhere else in Scripture to examine people before permitting them to do anything, much less before communion.

2) **Acts 15, the Council in Jerusalem. First** there is no use of the Greek term for council συνεδρίῳ, in this passage, though Luke uses it frequently in Luke and Acts to describe leaders with legitimate political and institutional power. **Second**, Acts 15 along with Galatians 2 is the one full record of the Apostles carrying out Matthew 18:15-17 — Church process and discipline. Acts 15 is a formal meeting of the Congregation to hear the dispute among the Apostles, Paul vs Peter, James et. al. The dispute began in Antioch between Peter and Paul when Peter refused to eat with the non-kosher Christians because of the arrival of men who claimed to represent James. Paul, in **Matthew 18:15 Step One**, opposes Peter to his face ("If any of you have ought against a brother let him confront him.") Paul in **Matthew 18:16 Step Two** goes to the Acts 1:6 Witnesses of the Church, the Apostles, ("If he will not hear you take two or three witnesses") to bear witness to his confrontation with Peter and James. Paul and the others (who are merely "reputed to be Apostles" until they affirm the Gospel that Jesus and Paul preached Galatians 2:8) seem to resolve their dispute. But it is serious enough to bring before the congregation for final judgment, like Jesus said to **Matthew 18:17 Step Three**. That is why the two original disputants, Peter and Paul, speak for the Apostolic witness that they are in agreement with Paul,

f. Stop! Do not argue again for a special office or organization of elders with special powers until you find the passages that command that office and that organization which is said to hold special powers to control and rule over God's people. ***Do not assume that organization, find it in Scripture first!***

C. You are mature when you can:

1. Remain pure, unspotted by the world.[173]
2. Love one another in the unity of the bonds of peace.[174]
3. Not be blown about by the winds of doctrine.

D. ***Maturity*** is when you can govern your life without need of external constraint. It requires:

1. **Ethical Maturity —** know God and know God's Law.
2. **Judicial Maturity —** Listen to the Holy Spirit and apply God's law wisely to all things,
3. **Executive Maturity —** Life of Integrity, driven by the sort of Love that describes young lovers in the thrall of their first love to live consistently with the one who died for them and Rose for them and seats them at his right hand.[175]
4. When any of these is lacking in the believer, unity can only be achieved through authoritarian governments sadly ordained by Genesis 3:16 and decisively removed by Jesus Christ in Matthew 19 and Luke 22:25.
5. When Ethical knowledge, Judicial wisdom and Executive Love are present, the disciplinary functioning of human organizations is unnecessary and will in time be removed. Mature Christians will no more tolerate a church government running their life than will a

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but their word even as Reputed Apostles is not sufficient to bind the congregation or the representatives of James who needed to hear the final word of judgment which could only come from a Matthew 18 congregation discipled successfully to hear, evaluate and pass judgment. "so it seemed good to the People." So, Paul is invited to testify to the Gospel he preached and its impact in the nations . The congregation passes judgment for Paul and the Apostles who by affirming Paul's Gospel affirm their own standing as Apostles, and against the representatives of James and perhaps against James. The congregation then agrees with the Apostles setting them the task of writing their conclusion to the Church at large on how to deal with this disagreement without compromising the Gospel. Read the chapter and underline anything that indicates the Apostles bind the congregation with any decision.

[173] James 1:27;

[174] ***List here all of the unity and love passages used in the rest of this section. This is something I have not done and believe it is an important step to understand the nature of Christian Maturity and Self Government. Also this Chapter is the chapter of Love, the executive power of the Congregation.***

[175] Ephesians 1-3.

child when he grows to adulthood tolerate his mother or father running his life. This is not are rejection of either parents or of leaders in the Church, but rather their satisfying success.

6. This maturity is not to be confused with the Jr High demanding that his parents quit bugging him. The maturity of adulthood calmly accepts that they stand on their own feet, and indeed they do standing with their parents as their crown.

E. **The Power of Maturity.** Maturity is the prerequisite to effectively understand, possess and exercise True Power in the World, power you were designed to exercise, a world that was only designed to be ruled by those who exercise that power and none other, but it is a power which cannot be exercised without that maturity. It is time to define the power of Maturity.

1. Power is the ability to get things done and the fruit of that accomplishment is a measure of that power.
2. Because of the fall into sin, and our loss of the ethical judicial and executive maturity to control our lives, the word "Power" has come to mean something quite different:

a. The force necessary to control others;
b. The force necessary to get others to do things;
c. The force necessary to unite people behind goals, purposes and laws;
d. The force to harm others when they do not support the cause as leaders think they should.
e. These are all aspects of authoritarian power, necessary when we lack the personal maturity of self-control and the power of God that flows through it when we voluntarily love, submit to and unite with each other.[176]

3. These meanings of the word "power" are the result of God granting authority to some to rule over others so as to protect mankind from the curse of living in rebellion in a moral universe — that curse is death. Self-government without God's law (which was the situation from Curse to Cross is lawless anarchy and death. (Not to be confused with the Lawful self-rule of the mature adult.) But what has seemed normal in history is abnormal, God did not originally design things to run this way, "from the beginning it was not so."

a. Therefore, there is a legitimacy to authoritarian governments based on God's preserving grace in a world where, self-government (though self-government by God's law from the heart was God's design before the fall) would after the fall be impossible because hard hearts reject God's law and they would be incapable of governing themselves. The result is, humankind would quickly kill

[176] I Timothy 1:9; Romans 13:3

itself off as God promised, if there were no authority to enforce order, no power to protect the weak.

b. This "legitimacy" of authoritarian government is akin to Joseph's deliverance of Egypt from starvation by reducing them to slaves of the Pharaoh. Slavery trumps starvation but it is scarcely a pleasant, blessed, victorious or productive estate. Nor is it God's plan from the beginning.

4. From the beginning, Authoritarian Government's power to ***force*** unity was not so, especially in Marriage.[177]

a. Power as designed by God to be exercised by redeemed humanity is first of all the ability to get the things done that a person creatively imagines can be done. It does not prescribe any particular method or organizational pattern to get things done. These two things are often confused in people's mind.

b. Therefore, Power can also be understood as the force of creative success that is released when people work together and achieve their united goal. Again, the pattern of their working together is not expressly given and people have a hard time believing that unity can be achieved voluntarily, therefore they tend to think that if something is accomplished as a group someone must have the power to get people to do what he wanted done — in short, there must be government coercion to enforce unity and the good things that result from united action.

c. More can be done by uniting people to a cause than can be done individually. It's a simple fact of life. That is, greater power comes from unified action. The question is, what forms of unity are more powerful than others, more productive etc.?

5. Power then is the ability to unite in a common purpose to accomplish something. Power is not the force that unites us against our will. Power is the result of that free unity however the unification takes place whether voluntarily or through force.

a. To unite requires the submission of a group of people to the leadership of a few who define and coordinate their efforts to achieve a common purpose. With the accomplishment of that purpose there is a new power released into the world — a newly created value and all who worked to create it share in it.

b. God did not create a world that was winding down, though the physical world on its own may be described that way. But the physical world is not on its own, mankind in God's image was put in charge of it. Therefore, when the world is recreated by mankind it is

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[177] Genesis 1:28; 2:24; 3:16; Matthew 19:5. As marriage is used as a pattern of government in general of someone legitimately ruling over someone else, the lifting of the unilateral authority of the husband to punish his wife has related impact on other forms of government.

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(1) socially unified by voluntary love;

(2) directed by the principles of God's law;

(3) a world that would increase in Kingdom, Power and Glory.

c. This unity, submission and leadership is what human organization has always been about from the beginning. But without God's law written on the heart of man and woman, . . . unity and submission is out of anyone's reach because human organization requires lawful unity.

d. If that law cannot/willnot/isnot applied by the self-governed individual, . . . it will be applied by an intrusive organizational government and forced on the people with no regard for their particular needs. This is Authoritarian Government, necessary because the human heart from Adam until Christ, lacked that lawful definition of God's source code, it was a heart of stone.

e. When God revealed that source code of creation to mankind through Moses, He did not ordain organizations, nor did He deliver His law to organizations to be enforced on others. He said, "I am the Lord ***YOUR*** God, ***YOU*** shall . . ." He delivered it to the seat of Kingdom government in the earth, the saints of the Most High — YOU. His creation-source code defines what men later would call the three branches of government, but are in reality three dimensions of the human heart: The **Legislative** the ethical that knows God and affirms His law; The **Judicial**, that judgment which evaluates all things in the light of that law; and the **Executive**, that romantic drive, that "delights to do ***Your*** will O Lord" and carries it out to recreate the entire earth turning it into an infinite storehouse of sustainable glory.

f. Because Humankind could no longer voluntarily unite together because of sin, God beginning with the family,[178] ordained for organizational governments to unite people by force. It is an incredibly inefficient and painful unity, whether in the home, the church or the state. It is an enforced unity whereby even covenant breakers could unite sufficiently to create enough value and power to slowly, painfully grow in their dominion in the earth, even though on its own, because of sin, there was no real future to this growth.

g. Even so, God locked His promise of space time Historical victory into creation itself ordaining not only a seventh day they could look ahead to for His rest from their futile labors. There was an eighth day coming which would inaugurate a return to the new heaven and earth of creation, as new as Adam and Eve were — a second Adam.

h. This Eighth day is the birth, and reign of Jesus Christ.

6. Humanity reflects its Divine Creator who used His Being Fully Three and Fully One as His analogy for the fundamental nature of

[178] Genesis 3:16

Humanity in His image:

a. ***Unity*** is not one option among others. It is what we do and are. Humanity is designed at its core to be social, to organize, to work together to complete tasks and to compete for the most effective and efficient solutions that will solve each other's problems. This is what the free market is, it is the competition to meet each other's needs in a way that is self-sustaining to everyone's advantage. Biologically we see God's Image in the designed growth from helpless single cell to fully mature self-sustaining adult in community.

b. ***Individuality*** is not an option. It is what we are. There is no melding of the individual into a group mind. No fanciful Borg, no Vulcan mind-meld. At the core, each individual person is responsible for the conduct of their own existence. No one but you, not your elders, your governors, your parents, or your spouse will stand before God on that Day in your place. Nor will anyone take your guilt if you join them because they are in authority but they were wrong. You are called to be, "The spiritual man judges all things and is judged by no one."

c. For humanity, both unity and individuality are irreducible realities. Society images the true unity of God and Individual responsibility images the true individuality of the persons in the God-head.

7. Human Being is designed from the core to judge, . . . and decisions are always based on the idea that there is a right and a wrong which requires judgment. Existence is a bargain with the future, to imagine its possibilities based on what is known at the present and then work to make them happen. Only God's law can make this transaction a successful blessing.

8. There are two avenues to attain ***organizational unity*** and these define how to achieve the power that unity grants to those who unite:

a. **Authoritarian —** Elite leaders, with special powers "authority" which others do not have, are given the monopoly on the organization's power and use it to impose this unity on a group of people controlling them by force. The rules governing and defining the unity of a people are called law and these elite leaders enforce that law on the people for their own good and for the good things they produce.

b. **Self-Government —** each person voluntarily unites with those whom they choose to submit to. Submission is the gift of the individual to the group that cannot be forced. There is no monopoly of power held by any leader. The law governing and defining their unity is simple, it's called God's law — it governs how to love God and how to love mankind. That Law governs the ideas and actions which their ethical judgment will use to evaluate what/who they should voluntary submit to and for how long. To achieve the unity which an organization needs to accomplish a broader purpose, requires leaders with ideas that others believe are worthy to unite

behind. In such organization there is incredible power to create a greater value and with it a greater power in the earth that was not there before this vision united people to achieve it from the fullness of their heart.

9. Rejecting God's law, from the Garden, made voluntary unity impossible and so God mercifully made provision by instituting coercive authoritarian government, Genesis 3:16 to mimic with force what was supposed to happen from the Original Program at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Namely God's law was to be written on their hearts and they were to become likean intentional moral being. God who defines morality as the Character of His being, Adam and Eve who Incarnate Morality as his image separate in gender but one flesh in their union.
10. By rejecting this Ethical transformation of the center of their being, they became incapable of self-government without destroying everything that God had created in their chaotic anarchy.
11. What changed this situation was God made a way to be adopted into His Family and be transformed into the image of the 2nd Adam, Jesus Christ. This salvation is more than just an existential leap, or a trip to heaven, it provides the three factors that make voluntary unity possible once again on earth as it is in heaven, and in that unity releases a constructive power not seen since the foundation of the world. These three factors are —

a. **God's law —** This handbook devotes much space to the significance of that law being written on newly created hearts in God's people literally changing the terms and rules of the game from that of the authoritarian government of Genesis 3:16 to that of the self-government of Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2; Luke 22:25-28, I Peter 5:1-3; I John 1:6-10, 2:3-6,15-19, 3:4,10,24.

b. **The Holy Spirit —** The fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in each of God's children individually and the Church corporately in both its congregational and its universal existence is another game changer of the New Covenant. This change in the place God causes his name to dwell is not optional it is required by Scripture, it is the definition of believer, one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. John 14-17; Acts 2; I John 2:1-2,20,27 (just to barely scratch the surface).

c. **Love/Unity — Neither the Law nor the Holy Spirit is alone —** For someone to voluntarily submit to any leader (I Peter 5:1-5) he will have more than law and more than God abiding in him. The presence of these two will be manifested by the Love of God (John 17) that is shed abroad in the hearts of God's New Creation individually and corporately (Romans 5:5; I John 2:10-11, 3:10,11,16-19,23-24, 4:7-8). ***Jesus tells the world that He staked his entire claim for it to believe in Him on this love in His people and the voluntary unity it creates out of the chaos of fallen lawless human relationships.*** Go ahead, stop here and read John 17:20-26.

1 Corinthians 13. This is not a minor issue, love is not merely another way of saying "law" it is the executive force of God and of law as He intended it to be executed.

d. **Read it and weep.**

e. **I know especially to Reformed thinkers steeped in rationalistic development of both theology and God's law, for both those who believe the Gifts of the Spirit have ceased, and those who believe they continue alike, this staking of faith on the love of God seen in the love and unity of His people seems emotional, unstable, whimsical, even liberal and enthusiastic.** So, it is worth listening to the last thing Jesus had to say about this emotional, unbalanced, whimsical world, before He went out into the night, betrayed. Here is what Jesus said should characterize all of us.

John 17:20-26 Father . . . that they may all be ***one***; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, ***so that the world may believe*** that You sent Me. [22]The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be ***one***, just as We are ***one***; [23]I in them and You in Me, that they may be ***perfected in unity***, ***so that the world may know*** that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. [24]Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My ***glory*** which You have given Me, for You ***loved*** Me before the foundation of the world. [25]"O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; [26]and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, ***so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them***."

f. The remainder of this section will be a walk through, the extensive call in Scripture to love one another at all cost, and the unity of the faith it produces. But for here it is sufficient to emphasize with John at the end of the Apostolic ministry of that 1st generation Church that these three ideas together are the foundation of order and government in the Church and in the earth. These are the highest reason for an unbeliever to recognize the claims of Jesus Christ. John at the end of the Apostolic generation, does not make even one single appeal to the elders as officers to enforce the submission of anyone. He makes no appeal to anyone who might hold a special and unique authority in the church which any Christian whom he addresses does not also represent as member of the Kingdom of God. (I John 3:20-24). *His letter is to each Christian alive when he wrote and every Christian to the end of time* ***unmediated by any human authority.*** There is no elder, or shepherd, or overseer empowered to enforce the submission, . . . the love. . . or the unity of His people. These things are forever out of the reach of institutional government and officers to effect in the people.

g. This is the power in the upper room that Jesus Christ called his leaders to exercise. Throughout His ministry literally every time

Jesus announced his death they asked, "Who is the greatest." They wanted to know who should lead when He is gone and assumed that it would be the greatest. His answer throughout His ministry concerning how to govern in His Kingdom when He was gone is summarized in this last normal hour He had on earth — "The Gentiles exercise authority over the people and their great ones love to be called benefactors, but it is not to be so among you. . . . the master sits at the table, but I am among you as a servant." Only those who believe they are greater than Jesus, teach that they have special powers, powers that are associated with an office, powers exalting their elite rule over God's people. Powers that give them a monopoly on the ability to control the group. Powers God's people do not have except through them, their representative, their priest. Powers of mediation no matter how they deny it for they deny these powers to others and it is grace they dispense in the liturgy, teaching and sacraments.[179]

12. These three — **God's law** written on the human heart, The **Holy Spirit** writing that law and guiding its application, and **Love, leading to the unity of the body in discerning holiness** are the three indispensable legs of the Maturity necessary to make self-government possible. Without any one of them, the community of God's people cannot sustain the free association necessary to unite and accomplish God's will in the earth and so Genesis 3:16 — Authoritarian Government — is the inevitable result until God's people come of age.

F. More than any other term, Love and Unity define the ideal Christian life to which the New Testament calls God's new creation. Love is the word used most frequently to describe the relationship of one Christian to another, of individual Christians to God and of the Church generally to God. Love is the basis of New Testament Unity, New Testament Community and New Testament Action.

1. The general study of Love is not difficult, just do a word search in any Bible software, or better, Google. Search out love and unity. Be prepared to die to yourself and your patriarchy, and to your great-man leadership theories. If you aren't the word study will kill them.

2. The difference between keeping the law and loving someone is not the point here, though it is important to note that the Law is not the same as Love and to merely fulfill points of the law is by no means loving nor is it loving to violate the law either. Even the law itself calls for more than mere point by point fulfillment. For instance, to avoid adultery is not the same as loving your wife and no matter how well you treat and care for your wife, having an affair is not loving her either. To never lie is not the same as telling the truth, yet merely

[179] If you find these words offensive, ask first if they truly represent the power of elders. If so they should not offend you if you believe that power is correctly represented here.

telling the truth can be a clanging gong and tinkling symbol as can any aspect of law keeping or dramatic action on behalf of another. To have no other God before the True God is not the same as loving the Lord with all your heart soul mind and strength and of course "all" means with no reserve for loving any created thing more. Love does keep the law, but as with good sex, the object of love is the beloved, not the rules of lovemaking. In loving the beloved, the law will be kept . . . and so much more. In fact, mere keeping of the law is not love at all, it is the constraint of a contract. God knows it which is why the Law demands the whole heart, and yet regardless of demand only love can keep it. Love is not the demand it is the fulfillment.

3. Mk. 10:21, "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Where does the law require that? Oh of course, the Second Commandment. Who would do such a thing as that? Only the wildly out of control lover. That is why love is the executive branch manifested in the self-government of the individual rather than the forcible constraint of a leader. Only love can fulfill the 2nd commandment though many things can obey it.

G. The focus of Church order, which is the topic of this handbook, is not love in general, but rather the constant exhortation to love one another in different ways.

1. The unique nature of love is that it is a driving desire to care for the needs of others in a way that enables them to develop their gifts to the greatest level that is possible for them to do. It is not, "Oh you are poor so you can only . . . Oh you are rich so you can . . ." It is, "Oh! you are gifted here let me help your gifts to shine! You are loved of God, let me shine as much of God's love through me to you as I can."
2. Love makes the impossible possible. Love is the force that makes social cohesion adhere. Love is what makes voluntary association of self-governing individuals possible because love is the force that leads us to find meaning, faith and hope in a calling to which we submit the efforts of our life.
3. Love is . . . is what binds us together making the unity of the faith in the bonds of peace possible and therefore it is the source of power and of value-creation. Love is the driving force of human exchange.
4. Other than love, the only other power to gain compliance or submission is to force another to comply or submit. By definition that is not love, unless you are working with the mentally, morally, and developmentally handicapped. You do not find forcing ethically, judicially and executively mature adults to submit anywhere among the powers either practiced or taught in the New Testament. Love is not a power of the state, the church or the

marriage. Love is not love unless it is freely given from a pure heart. Love, not law, is the foundation of submission. All the law can do is list minimums, except in its most general statement, and then it reveals the foundation of obedience, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

5. The Biblical pattern is to love one another from a pure heart which ties us into uniting with others in various different organizations and releasing the true power which cannot be attained by any form of government-forced association and at best is approximated by commands.

H. You will find when we are done that the New Testament is more about love and unity than almost any other topic. Here are three Bible Studies Do them before you agree or disagree. They are simple.

1. **Ephesians**,

a. Read through the first time quickly and simply underline or jot down all the times Paul exhorts us to love, or to unite. Quickly the point of the study is to survey the field and see all the times Paul says something. This overwhelming flood is often missed because we spend so much time in each particular.

b. Read through a second time and jot down what Paul says the result of that love will be for you and those you gather with.

c. How central is love and unity to our life as a community?

d. In fact if these are removed is there anything left? If so what?

2. **Philippians**

a. Read through the first time quickly and simply underline or jot down all the times Paul exhorts us to love, or to unite.

b. Read through a second time and jot down what the result of that love will be for you and those you gather with.

c. How central is love and unity to our life as a community?

d. In fact if these are removed is there anything left? If so what?

e.

3. **Corinthians**,

a. Read through the first time quickly and simply underline or jot down all the times Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit will do something to or in us.

b. Read through a second time and jot down what the result of that Spiritual work in your life for you and those you gather with.

c. How central is love and unity to our life as a community?

d. In fact if these are removed is there anything left? If so what?

4. **Now take an hour and look over everything Paul says about love, unity and the work of the Holy Spirit . . . Think hard, is there any role he gives to any organization or office to accomplish anything you read about or jotted down?**

5. **Don't just skim this part. The Church has spent 2000 years convincing us all that its organizational offices are central to making this love and unity real . . . Take the time necessary to discover what Paul says that would lend credence to that claim?**
6. Look, I know we are told by 6,000 years of the traditions of the gentiles that all those things are the responsibility of an organization and its leaders to require us to do, therefore it is only sensible to find the best the greatest leaders to lead us. Who is the Greatest? But can you find one place that Paul says that leaders in the Church are empowered to enforce or discipline anyone to love and unity? Can you find where Jesus says that? The most you will find is where to justify their existence Traditions of men, venerable and holy men, tell us that God's people are incapable of living a mature life of love and unity without a leader who is empowered to force them to do so and you will find in every Church organization a set of rules written or unwritten describing the shepherd, the overseer, the elder, or whatever the leaders may call themselves as men empowered to force God's people to love Him from a Pure Heart, to love the brethren and to judge wisely the winds of doctrine and their own lives and so from the heart keep his commandments.
7. The issue here is this task is beyond human jurisdiction, just as those who accuse us of utopian, egalitarian anarchy say. The difference is that this is where God's law has always been aimed from the Beginning before the fall, when it was reveled in Moses, and finally when it was written in the flesh of Jesus Christ and then on the tables of his people's hearts. The aim has always been those who embody the kingdom of God— to us on whom have come the ends of the ages. God's plan was always to have a people who need no human jurisdiction. That today, or in AD 1600 or AD 1200 or AD 300 or 1000 BC fallen humanity needed human jurisdiction does not mean that from the beginning this was so, or that in Christ it will always be so.

VIII. THE POWER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

This covers the same Ground from a different angle but it is a continuation of the attempt to make Biblical Power Clear because for the last 2,000 years, the Gentile definition of power has been the norm. The point of it all is, Scripture is not silent on this question.

A. There are five different kinds of power set forth throughout the New Testament perhaps most clearly from I & II Timothy, Titus, Corinthians, John's Upper Room Discourses and 1-3 John.

1. **The power in and of the example set by the leader himself** his track-record, his argument, his goals, his methods, humility, love, doctrine and service. The leader has control over this.
2. **The power of God backing** the word of the leader both affirming his personal direction as well as affirming that direction in the minds and hearts of those who submit. Leader has no influence or control over this it is up to God.
3. **The power of those who submit** to the leader's ideas gives them the power to accomplish things as part of a group which could never be done alone. The leader has influence but no control over who will submit.
4. **The power of the things accomplished** when the leaders lead and the people follow important things happen in the earth and it is changed another step closer to God's goals and plans set from the foundation of existence. The leader has some control over this since people are following his lead but he has no control over the people who follow other than his example and teaching and their willingness to join in.
5. **The power of a competitive diversity.** Creation is the sort of place where there are an infinite number of ways to legitimately accomplish almost anything. God's law simply wards off the relatively small domain of things you can do to solve problems that in the end make everything worse and destroys all you hold dear. The social dynamics of God's society on earth does not boil everything down to a one size fits all legal control which is why leadership is not tied to the limited and puny powers of enforcement and discipline. This enables leaders and vision to flourish as well as to fail, guided by God's law from the heart as well as allowing poor leaders and bad ideas to fall by the wayside.

B. The two ideas 1) Leadership and 2) The Power to set and enforce policy. These two are so tightly entwined in our thinking it is almost impossible for most people to separate them. If you say, "Leaders cannot force people to follow." what many hear is "There is no such thing as leadership, God authorizes everyone does whatever he wants, God's law is irrelevant, anarchy and chaos are recommended." For most the concept of self-control is unthinkable when it comes to leadership. For them, their only alternative to the

control of a leader is lawless chaos. ***What Jesus taught does not prohibit leading. Jesus commanded Leadership: "Go make Disciples!" is a demand to Go Lead, as is "Rule well."The command Paul gives to Timothy is to reward those who "rule well" with double honor. Elders are to be chosen to rule the household of God as well as they rule their own households. Ruling is the command to lead in a way people want to follow, say things in a way people want to believe them, live a life that people want to live. To be a Zechariah 8:23 Christian. Rule, is not power to punish.***

1. Forcing people to submit is what is never commanded in the NT on the one hand and is directly prohibited on the other. In the Upper Room, Jesus is not telling us to rule like a master but to rule like a servant. The issue doesn't turn on whether or not someone rules, it turns on the source of power available to that ruler, that governor, that pastor, that elder, that husband: What is the power source of the Kingdom of God? By what power do its leaders rule? What is the glory God holds out to those in His Kingdom where to rule is to powerfully motivate, not powerfully threaten and punish?
2. Of course leaders are in charge, the question is does their power to lead depend on their ability/gift to lead? On the example they set? The persuasion of their articulation? On God's affirmation of their leadership? And on the people grasping their vision and stepping into it? ***Or*** does that leadership depend on the leaders power to force people to follow?

C. What Jesus created was a royal priesthood who would "no longer need anyone to teach them but they would all know Him from the least of them to the greatest."[180] Because of this knowledge in each believer each is held personally accountable for their evaluation, judgment and actions based on the Law of God. This priesthood did not have higher human authorities whom they could blame for their sin by appealing to authority, like Adam did, "This woman, [this elder, this husband, this civil governor,] you gave me," . . . or like Eve, "This serpent deceived me . . . gave me the fruit and I ate."[181] From Scripture we know that this did not mean Christians would be morally perfect, omniscient, or that the Church did not need the teaching, pastoral and prophetic gifts to disciple God's congregation. There is still order in God's house, still a first and a last.[182] There is still a, "Don't **lead** like the master of the house **lead** like I did, as a servant." ***But what is removed from leadership is the authoritarian status to police and punish those who do not follow their lead — the monopoly on power once held by leaders who create holy things and then control people's access to them.*** To

[180] Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11ff; I John 2:18-27; I Peter 2:9.

[181] Jeremiah 31:29-30. Is the introduction to the Law being written on the heart of flesh. Genesis 3:12-13.

[182] Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31 and Luke 13:30; Ephesians 4:1-10.

lead in God's kingdom requires leaders who rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and not on the organization of human hierarchical control — the "greatest among you" cannot do this because of their prior commitment to their own greatness as well as the commitment of others to their greatness thinking the great should wield great controlling power. The King of all Creation requires ***more*** power and authority than the "greatest" will be able to generate through human hierarchies of power. Authoritarian leaders and subservient followers produce a congregation that cannot bear the weight of glory — the things that eye cannot see, nor ear hear which God has in store for his people.[183]

1. ***"A man can't serve two masters." "Can a spring give both fresh water and salt?"***[184] are not merely moral metaphors, they describe the decision facing all leaders in the Church: Is it God who empowers their word, or is it the rules which grant them control of the congregation that empowers their ministry? If it is not their institutional control then should there not be a public separation from all books of Church order and a renunciation of authority based on hierarchical institutional power however checked and balanced they may be? How long will Peter stay in the boat arguing that the laws of physics keeping the boat afloat are God's creation just as much as the invitation to walk on the water.

a. Does God's blessing come from the organization's ordination, and disciplinary control of the sacraments, control of worship, teaching and binding judgments on the congregation?

b. Or does God's blessing come from the affirmation of the Holy Spirit through the word of their testimony, the blood of the lamb and that they do not love their lives unto death?"[185]

c. Scripture is clear, it is the way of the Cross, it is the way of service, not the way of the master of the house, the great ones whom the Gentiles put in control of the people. It is sound doctrine that the Spirit uses to affirm His leaders and bless the work of their hands and answer their prayers.[186]

2. Had Jesus not spoken to this precise decision, branding authoritarian top down institutional power off-limits, calling it "Gentile rule" (ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν, the normal term for rightful authority and power to rule, there is no hint of the abuse of power in the term.)[187]

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[183] II Corinthians 3-4; I Corinthians 2:1-5

[184] Matthew 6:24; James 3:11.

[185] Revelation 12:11.

[186] Revelation 12:11; Matthew 16:21-27; Mark 10:42-44; I Corinthians 4:14-22; II Corinthians 4:5-17; I Timothy 4:16.

[187] "The rulers of the gentiles rule over (κυριεύουσιν) them and their great ones εξουσιάζουσι exercise authority over them." Luke 22:25, Matthew 20:25 speaks with intensive forms of the same verbs, κατακυριεύουσιν, and κατεξουσιάζουσιν. All forms refer to the legitimate lawful authority and power

then there might be some freedom to negotiate. But what He said, set the two sources of power against each other.

3. This Handbook is distinctive in Church history because it is the first comprehensive attempt to argue from all of Scripture that Jesus understood and meant exactly what He said, when He set forth his prohibition of authoritarian government because:[188] And yet it does not reject leadership or distinctions of gifting and organization. Scripture affirms shepherding, Preaching, and discipline. This is a systematic look at how there can be both leaders and submission without the grant of force to those leaders to insure discipline.

a. Jesus understood that transforming people from spiritually immature to mature is impossible for men and required leaders who would only rely on the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He slapped down their every attempt to establish an organization-based ministry requiring institutional rule.[189]

b. The nature of authoritarian government limits what a group so governed can do. It serves the purposes of a fallen humanity well, but it is as incapable serving the governmental needs of adults who are spiritually mature, self-governed according to the Law of God written on their recreated hearts of flesh, as parents are incapable of governing their children after they grow up. Only the servant has the maturity to realize that it is not by might or by power, including the power of human organization, that God's Kingdom is secured.

c. The New Wine of God's congregation can only adequately be contained by the New Wineskins of self-government, not the old wineskins of punitive external authorities.[190]

4. The full-time discipleship task of leaders in the Church is not to present themselves as brides, but to present to Jesus Christ a bride without spot or wrinkle able to both bear and shine forth the full weight of glory as His New Creature.[191] This task requires disciplers, not disciplinarians, a concept confused in people's minds,

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that the one in charge needs to lead, not its abuse. Jesus clearly said that the way the nations (ἐθνῶν) structure their government, by putting the greatest among them in charge with whatever power they need to rule, is not to be how His congregations are to structure their government. See further I Samuel 8, "Give us a king like the nations/gentiles." (הַגּוֹיִם; LXX, ἐθνῶν.)

[188] See ***When Children Walked the Earth.*** Joseph Foreman; Manuscript and audio book. For a more complete discussion.

[189] Luke 9:48; 22:26; Matthew 23:11; Mark 10:13-16, 35-45; The, "Who was the greatest" argument only came up when Jesus told them that he would die, thus creating a crisis of succession, "Who is the greatest, was the question of who was, most fit to lead the organization in His absence. It is Institutional power that Jesus addresses every time in these passages when he slaps down the whole program of institutional leadership and control.

[190] Mark 2:22.

[191] II Corinthians 3:7-4:17. Especially 3:3.

but not in Scripture. They must not be hindered by their own greatness, or the apparent but deceptive greatness thrust on them by organizational office, nor by any sort of legal or administrative work even as central to God's law as is the care for widows and orphans or establishing justice. They are witnesses not judges. They are Prayer warriors not administrators. They are teachers and feeders of the sheep, not executioners and disciplinarians. They are examples not authoritarians.[192] They are equippers of the people of God and it is those people who establish the kingdom, indeed who are the kingdom, if indeed we believe that "The Kingdom of God is within you . . . Out of your innermost being flow rivers of living water . . . for you are the temple of God . . . don't you know the Spirit of God dwells in you? . . . Equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry."[193]

5. Authoritarian government is necessary to disciple the ethically and judicially incompetent such as children and the extremely aged, the mentally impaired and the criminal; not the ethically, judicially and executively mature spiritual adult in God's kingdom. Jesus knew that if indulged in as the government model for God's congregation, authoritarian governing would distract God's Elders from their true objective: mature congregations — a powerful people, not a few powerful leaders. The weakness of authoritarian government lies in a governing model that is designed to prevent decay, lawless anarchy, and death, but cannot by positive decree promote godly government because the law cannot make one lawful. Therefore, it cannot help but perpetuate the spiritual immaturity it was designed to hold back. The best it can realistically hope to produce is a few exceptions who are recruited and groomed for leadership. The New Testament nowhere accepts this pathetic result as if that must fulfill the word of God written on the heart of each member of God's family, catalyzed by the work of the Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh. [194] Simply because this is the best authoritarian government can do does not mean it is the best the King of God's Kingdom expects to be done.[195] The restored Image of God recreates ***each*** Christian to pick up where Adam and Eve left off —

a. The Cultural Mandate to unlock the creative fruitfulness of creation including society and culture.
b. The Great Commission to transform the nations through discipleship, not legal conquest.
c. The power and glory unleashed by the authenticating, suffering service that go with the Mandate and Commission to open and close the doors of heaven and tear down the gates of hell;

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[192] Acts 1:6ff; 6:2; I Peter 5:3.

[193] Luke 17:21; John 7:38; I Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 4:11.

[194] Joel 2: 28; Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; Acts 2 esp. 17;

[195] Mark 11:12-25.

d. ***These are the birthright of each child of the King*,**

e. **Not *the prerogative and exclusive powers of an elite priestly class of mediators in the Church regardless of what humble names they name themselves with or what humble adjectives they use to describe their demeanor and ministry, or what humble limits they put on their power and authority in the introduction to their books of Church Order before they then go on to detail the complete control they have over the Congregation of God, the Bride of Christ.***

6. The Glory in the faces of "the least of these my brethren" is the Glory Paul speaks of in II Corinthians 3:17-18 *"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But **we all**,[196] with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."* This is not the glory reserved for elders, but for each Christian.

7. Is this the reality of the Christians the world encounters each day? Or is "blown about by every wind of doctrine"[197] the reality? Does taking away congregational control from a select group of leaders and replacing it with the requirement of the right and duty of private judgment result in anarchy? or the blessing of free self-government in light of what the word of Jesus, Peter, and Paul say about redemption accomplished and applied to each member of the Church?

8. The inescapable issue here is the offense of the cross. The cross is God's design for ministry, organization, service and authenticating both leaders and truth. Jesus calls Satanic alternative organizing, authorizing, or certifying principles for leadership and ministry,.[198]

D. There is no way around the offense of the Cross. Not its offense to others. Offense to us! You and I who must like Christ despise the shame it brings to us and the loss of the privilege to control those we lead. When Peter Confesses, "You are the Christ." Jesus elevates him to the dizzying height of the Corner Stone of the Church throughout the ages and gives him the keys of God's Kingdom to close the very gates of Hell. Not because Peter is an Apostle, but because he is a Christian confessing the true confession of service and submission. Then Peter is to be submitted to. Within minutes Peter, the corner stone, is dashed to the ground, called, Satan. Peter is now the stumbling stone that will cause Jesus Christ Himself, and the church throughout the ages to fall and the keys to be taken away

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[196] **NOT "WE ELDERS."** These words from Paul were written in a book that found no role for elders to resolve the myriad of problems the Corinthians were ensnared in, nor did Paul view the lack of elders or the failure of proper eldering as the reason for those problems.

[197] Ephesians 4:11.

[198] Matthew 16:23 "Get behind me, Satan!"

should they submit to his word apart from his ethical, judicial and executive faithfulness. In no way is Peter to be submitted to under those circumstances. His authority that came from the commission of Christ in verse 18 is lost in verse 23 because he sought to remove the offense of the Cross — the offense of Philippians 2 — the offense of the Christian life in which authority, the right to be submitted to, is based on service, on taking up your cross and following Jesus.[199] Peter's false confession did not remove the offense of the cross from others (as we so often limit its offense) ***he removed it from his own life***. ***Peter was the one offended (caused to stumble) by the cross as we are caused to stumble when we erect gentile governments. What is a Gentile government? It is a government whose rulers rest the authenticity, the message, the ministry, the ordination of leaders on anything other than the cross of God's word in service to Him. When we do, His words are to us as much as Peter: "get thou behind me Satan!" Service is not a sympathetic metaphor, it is not a "servant's heart." It is the difference between Peter on a cross, the Corner Stone of the Temple of God vs Peter in charge of things, the Stumbling Stone who makes Christ Himself and His church useless tasteless salt on the dung heap of the world.***

1. If this can happen to Peter, it can happen to any elder who seeks authority other than service, the cross, Scripture, to be the authority that empowers his ministry requiring submission of others.
2. If after 2,000 years honesty demands the admission that the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ have not produced such unveiled Christians capable of mature self-government marked by the Cross of Jesus Christ, should we not ask the elders to be called to account and should any honest elder be more than willing to ask, "Why?" . . . .
3. Should we not follow that question wherever Scripture takes us to answer it? To look with open eyes where no one has opened their eyes before, such as at the warning that Jesus gave: that leadership which fails to be the suffering seed falling to the ground is gentile leadership and, "It shall not be so among you!"?[200]

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[199] Matthew 16:21-27.

[200] Matthew 16:24; John 12:24-26; There is no room for institutional exception, or institutional fulfillment, or institutional certification in these words of Christ. Gentile leadership that "exercise authority over others," Luke 22:24, means literally leadership that is outside the covenant — Gentile. Leadership outside the covenant is Leadership that is based on something other than the confession of Truth, the example of Truth, the demonstration of Truth, the blood of the Truth Himself. Leadership outside the covenant is based on an organization's membership, an organizations certification, an organization's official powers, an organization's salary an organization's claim that it is the rightful heir of the powers of the Kingdom of God however conveyed. Leadership that is based on some aspect of creation Maleness? Greatness? Organizational authority?

4. Those who believe authoritarian government is necessary, inevitably accuse themselves of immaturity as soon as they explain that, "The Church would descend into anarchy — chaos and disorder, heresy, sin and error — if the elders did not have the power to control admission to the sacraments; to control standing in the Church; to control worship and teaching; if the elders did not have exclusive control of the keys of the kingdom and power over the body of Christ. These things will happen if the elders, ***not*** the believer, is the final judge of what the believer is to believe and do." If they are correct, then they have just described what immature people do. If their congregations are unable to control themselves, then they must be controlled in a way appropriate only for children, the mentally impaired, and the criminal.[201] This is their assessment (all we can do is concur with their self judgment) of the fruit of 2,000 years of the authoritarian ideal of leadership.
5. The defining mark of maturity is the child who no longer needs the external forceful guiding hand of the parent to govern him to do what is right.[202] If self-government is beyond a child's ability at age 20, then he is considered impaired and treated like a child not an adult sadly needing to be controlled by others.[203] Like the child, if the congregation after a reasonable amount of time is unable to walk self-governed by God's law from their heart without falling into anarchy and bitter contention, then by definition the authoritarian government of God's people is necessary, and has failed.
6. The very definition of maturity is that self-governing men and women of the Spirit "have no need to be taught to 'know the Lord.'"[204] Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 define maturity as Christians having hearts of flesh inscribed by God's law able to live and apply God's word to all of life through self-government. Yet the claim that this would lead to anarchy indicates that the discipleship of the last 2,000 years managed to erase what God's word says is written on the heart of His people. "By now you should be teachers . . ."
7. Some will argue that authoritarian control by the leadership is barely able to compel people to unite in order to ward off heresy and sin. Therefore, they argue, how could a sane person propose self-

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Congregational vote? Hands laid on? A prophetic word? A combination of these things? Rather than on the good confession of every word that proceeds from the mouth of God made from the cross of your life and ministry. This is Gentile Leadership. Jesus did not reject Gentile Leadership because he wanted to fail, or he wanted egalitarianism, or anarchy. He rejected it because true power to lead, to inherit the earth, lies elsewhere not among the gentiles.

[201] Galatians 3:24; 4:19.

[202] I Corinthians 13:11.

[203] Hebrews 5:12-14; I Corinthians 3:1-4.

[204] Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20 & 36:26; John 14:16,26 & 15:7-10,26 &16:13; Hebrews 8:10-11 & 10:16; I Corinthians 3:5.

governing freedom in Christ[205] as a unifying force for sound doctrine and fellowship?[206] The Church would fly apart at the seams with division. Again, this is their appeal to the lack of self-control in the Church as they know it. If the Church would be overrun by an anarchy of sinful divisions (which is not an unreasonable fear) that is proof that they who are offended at being thought immature are themselves confirming this immaturity. Only the immature cannot govern themselves freely in Christ.

8. What clearer admission that the old authoritarian wineskins cannot produce mature Christians nor handle the New Wine of Jesus Christ could there be? You cannot ignore Jesus' command to avoid authoritarian rule and expect to produce mature congregations. [207]
9. The disciples thought a fruitful peaceful home would be impossible with their brides if Jesus took away their power to rule over them with the threat of divorce.[208] So too, elders today object to the loss of their power over the Bride of Christ for fear of lawless anarchy and bitterness. They believe that the bride of Christ in their charge would descend into every heresy and sin if they did not control her with the threat of discipline and divorce/excommunication. What clearer confession could there be that Authoritarian leadership is incapable of inheriting the promises of God? Therefore, Jesus said they could not rule over either their own brides or his Bride by threatening divorce (excommunication). With the disciples we can the clergy say in these arguments, "Then it is better not to marry (be an elder)"
10. This does not do away with congregational discipline, or elders or leaders and rulers in the Church.

a. Jesus positively said in Matthew 18 that the power of separating people from the congregation belongs to the congregation not only in full session but in groups of two and three, you might say jointly and severally.
b. Negatively, Jesus forbade His elders to form an organization that would hoard this power of discipline to themselves as one of His last instructions to them in the Upper Room the night He was betrayed saying "It is not to be so among you."[209]
c. Positively, Paul focuses on the discipling function of elders throughout Timothy and the maturity of God's people as a whole as the end result of an elder's ministry. Paul gives an example of this positive discipling function in his two lengthy letters to the Corinthians where he makes no appeal to authority to simply solve

[205] II Corinthians 3:3,17 & I Corinthians 2:15.
[206] II Timothy 1:7 "God has given us a spirit of . . . love, power and self control."
[207] Luke 22:25ff.
[208] Matthew 19.
[209] Luke 22:25.

the problem authoritatively nor does he do so himself.

d. Simply because Jesus takes discipline away from the elders as a tool of discipleship does not mean He has removed discipline from the Church or has neutered discipling, or makes everyone equal in every respect.

e. His goal was not elders with the ethical judicial maturity to exercise discipline, but elders whose discipleship produced mature believers — the congregation — able to withstand the winds of doctrine — congregations who exercise discipline.

f. Discipline, the keys of the kingdom, is a power granted each believer in the congregation jointly and severally. Elders may discipline because they are believing members of the congregation of Jesus Christ, not because they are elders.

11. No matter how they might protest, the power of the elders to control access to every aspect of congregational life is the power of priestly mediation.[210] The power to require submission of the congregation is the power of atonement should the submission required be to an error. The arrogation of these two powers has failed to produce even one mature congregation that doesn't need authoritative men functioning as atoning mediators to keep it in line through submission of the people to their will. If this described the extent of the maturity of your son when he came of age, you would confess your failure as a parent. How much more so the failure of the great men of the Church to heed the words of Jesus Christ who said, "It is not to be so among you!"? Instead believers are told that because of sin and the impotence of God's word and Spirit, we must settle for an infant church codependent on the leadership until He returns.[211]

E. God does not need the puny powers of this world's organizations to validate His Word and His minister's authority and power. God's Spirit speaking through His Word are sufficient validation.[212] The servant's suffering service is the validation He both seeks and will uphold.

F. You may be someone who has been deeply frustrated with authoritarian governments and are deeply moved hearing that "the least of these" is given the full power and authority of Heaven and Earth promised in Jesus Christ. Hearing this it is easy to believe more highly of ourselves than we ought, thinking that we are more mature than in reality we are.

1. Nothing written in the Handbook should be taken as proof that the reader or the reader's fellowship has grown in sufficient maturity to

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[210] I Timothy 2:5.

[211] Hebrews 5:12 perhaps this is the same reason dispensationalism is so appealing, the God who cannot raise his people to maturity surely cannot transform the earth.

[212] I Corinthians 2:4-5; 4:18-21.

govern themselves from the heart so as to remove the necessity of authoritarian leadership.

2. Simply because the self-government of God's people is the ultimate goal of history does not mean that it is achievable today, or by you, merely because it is possible to picture it, or describe it, or write a handbook to implement it. Self-government is for the mature who "are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."[213] It is the goal of all discipleship.
3. Free self-government is Utopian to the congregation whose elders have failed to disciple them to spiritual maturity, tossed by every wind of doctrine.[214] But it is not Utopian to the congregation bearing the fruit of ethical and judicial maturity becoming in Christ what Adam and Eve were to become had they obeyed God at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil — mature rulers of the earth needing no man to coerce them unto righteousness.[215]
4. The question though is, "If God's plan is for more than what authoritarian government can produce, how does a congregation attain the freedom of self-control if today's immaturity, (confessed to by all as the reason Authoritarian government cannot be abandoned) is the best that the way of the Gentiles can produce?"
5. Free self-government will not come with revolution or with declarations or blueprints. If it could the Bible would have been written that way. It can only be the fruit of God's people when they grow sufficiently into the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ.[216]

G. The following are Scriptural guidelines for those who want to live the difference between anarchy and being freely self-governed by God's law from the heart:

1. ***Elders*** whose single-minded focus is to disciple a growing body that is not blown about by the winds of doctrine characterized by the Fruit of the Spirit, Faith, Hope and Love.[217]
2. ***Elders*** who walk away from every other administrative drain on their time, whether as judges, or administrators, of the congregation, or even becoming the indispensable "Go-To Guy".
3. ***The Congregation*** which maintains the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, living without rancor and bitterness over perceived and real differences even though and especially if these differences become in the end a reason to create a new congregation.[218]

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[213] Hebrews 5:14.

[214] Romans 12:14-18; I Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:15-16 & 22-26.

[215] Hebrews 5:14.

[216] Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 4:19; Colossians 1:27.

[217] Galatians 5; I Corinthians 13.

[218] Ephesians 4:1-6; 31 John 17:9-24; ; I Corinthians 1:10.

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4. ***The Congregation*** which contends for the faith as the warrior-bride they are[219] with all their heart soul and strength, [220] yet without bitterness or strife.[221]
5. ***A Congregation with their Elders*** confident in the work of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word to call out, define and refine His people, and therefore able to contend for Truth without needing to use institutional force to certify or defend it.[222]
6. ***A Congregation with their elders*** who understand that growth, and division are a necessary part of relying on God's Word and Spirit to sort all differences so that in the end if disagreement on an aspect of faith or action is impossible to overcome or live with peaceably, the congregation can divide in peace and clarity.

H. The form of government Our Lord called for is the fruit of, not the cause of, the issues discussed in Chapter III on the sufficiency of God's Word and Spirit to call out and define the congregation; and Chapter V on the growth and division of the Church to keep the focus of God's people on discipleship unto maturity and their calling to change the world not organizational maintenance; and Chapter II on the nature of Christian worship, fellowship ministry and outreach to provide the context for these things to take place.

I. No amount of wishful thinking can make it possible for the ideas in this Handbook to work apart from the fruit of maturity listed inG above. But by the same token, where that fruit is manifest, no amount of authoritarian demands or punishments can bind such people to live under authoritarian governments.

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[219] Proverbs 31:10, "A warrior wife, who can find?" The root חַיִל; pron. Chayil; Strongs #2428, translated throughout scripture as: "valiant, army, wealth, substance, valor, men of war." This is the Warrior-wife the Warrior-Bride of Christ whose husband Jesus Christ is establishing justice in the gate of the city.

[220] Revelation 2:4; Jude 1:3; II Peter 2's (notice the intensity of Jude and Peter's contention for the faith.) Luke 10:27; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 21:9; I Peter 5:1-4; I Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:28.

[221] I Corinthians 16:14; Philippians 2:14.

[222] John 14-17.

IX. THE POWER OF LEADERS

A. The world transforming power of the Holy Spirit[223] speaking through the Word of God is True Power, flowing from True Authority unmediated by any human authority to each child of God.[224] This is the only[225] power Jesus wanted His people to know[226] in the Church, especially when forming congregational fellowships — It is this power that dwells in the lowliest believer to whom *"the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, gives the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of your calling, what are the riches of the glory of your inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward* ***us who believe***[227]*, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ . . ."*[228] This authorization from God dwells ***in each believer*** and any human organization of leaders is created to foster and disciple that self-governing authority ***in the believer***, remembering that they, the leaders, are still subject to the judgment of those they are serving.[229] This self-government of each Christian is God's creation-design to make righteous government powerful, and wicked government impossible, by forbidding any government labeling of their managerial actions as,

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[223] John 3:16; Matthew 28:18-19; Acts 1: 8.

[224] Timothy 2:5.

[225] John 13:15-16; Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25; John 14:12-18, 25-26; 15:18-27; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 1:5, 18, 23-25; 2:1-5, 6, 10, 13-16 The next three pages could be filled with citations of scripture's claim that the power and knowledge of God's people and their rulers depends only on the Holy Spirit. There are no Scripture references referring to an empowered organization of elders providing such power and knowledge. The verses which could be consistent with affirming the power in an organization of elders to control the Church can be counted on the fingers of one hand, even if 3 have been cut off in a terrible accident. Even then, these two passages do not grant such power they could simply be interpreted as consistent with it if such a power were stated clearly somewhere else in Scripture. To find an organization with an authorized head as the only authorized mediator of the Church the exegete must import it in violation of the entire testimony of Scripture and the specific prohibition of Jesus, not to mention every line of Christian Theology. There are no verses explicitly stating that the decision of elders is the decision of the Holy Spirit.

[226] Knowledge, in the biblical sense. Idolatry, fornication and abuse of power are intertwining themes in Scripture. A common analogy for idolatry in Scripture is fornication, Jeremiah 3:6; Revelation 2:14; One of the most disgusting uses of this analogy is Ezekiel 23 where Israel was trusting/fornicating/knowing its political security and future to Babylon. Revelation 18:3 combines the moral, religious and political issues in the same analogy combining the 2nd and 7th commandments.

[227] Scripture does **NOT** say**,** "TOWARD ***US*** WHO ARE ***ELDERS*** . . ."

[228] Ephesians 1:17-23; II Corinthians 3:7-4:18.

[229] Ephesians 5:1-2, 21. Cf. Gordon Runyan.

'God speaking through the church.' These are the kings of the Earth the Prophets saw bringing their tribute and crowns into the New Jerusalem. Each Christian a King casting down his golden crown around the throne, Each Christian a Priest bringing fitting worship in all his life stands for. This is New Covenant government.[230]

B. All who are born of the Spirit, professing faith in Jesus Christ, can be defined by paragraph IX.A and are capable of Free Self-Government. Therefore, in a world that from Genesis 3 until today knows only authoritarian rule — the rule of select men who bear an authority and power to rule over their subjects, authority the people they rule do not have — it is important to clearly state the Real Authority and Power which Christ holds out to the leaders in His church.

C. Authoritarian government was not the original design for humanity, nor God's intended pattern for social organization, but rather a design that could serve to postpone the promise of death to those who rebel against God's word[231] until He came.

1. The Government God planned from the Creation was that creatures who bore His image and likeness would have His law shaping their heart and therefore would grow to ethical (knowledge) and judicial (application) maturity. The fruit of this maturity is that they could freely govern themselves (take responsible action) with no need of an authoritarian executive government of men to force them to unpack the riches of God's world in conformity with the Law of God — which is the source code of creation and fruitful creativity. ("Be fruitful multiply and fill the earth" is the inevitable result of hearts governed by God's law and hopelessly retarded where men attempt to force that fruitfulness on others.
2. When Adam and Eve covenanted with death, instead of eating from the Tree of Life, God had to invoke the extreme ministry of authoritarian governors[232] to sustain them from that promised death until Christ, the Second Adam, came with His promised redemption, to crush the head of the serpent, restore and reestablish his Creation Order in the Earth, and empower the free government of self-control.[233]
3. In Jesus Christ God has begun the transformation of humanity.
4. This transformation restores our ethical hardwiring — our source code, the prime directive — of God's law in the heart of His people according to Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hebrews.[234] The transformed heart does not require perfection, it does not end in legalism or

[230] I Peter 2:9

[231] Genesis 2:17; Matthew 19:8.

[232] Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:16.

[233] Genesis 3:15; II Timothy 1:7; Luke 10:19; Malachi 4:2-3.

[234] As cited throughout.

formalism, but does result in a true growth in historically measurable sanctification, enabling a better way.[235] As God's people grow in grace, they disciple the nations and they grow in personal understanding of God's law and self-control doing even greater thangs than Jesus did.[236] How they govern reflects this growth.

5. God's first promise in history was that death would attend the rejection of His Word. "The day you eat of it you die."[237]
6. God's first promise after Adam and Eve rejected His word was to promise that the Serpent would never succeed. He and his seed would be crushed in that same historical space/time continuum begun there in the Garden by the woman whom God would redeem with her skull crushing Seed.[238] In the midst of which God became flesh, dwelt among us and was offered up as a sacrifice for us.
7. Because sin hardened her and her husband's heart making a life-giving world an almost impossibly fruitless field of thorns and thistles, God promised the woman a form of government in the home which would enable humanity to continue but only through organizing itself in the form of patriarchal authoritarian governments, starting with her now patriarchal family. The command to rule over the woman did not come to the man, but rather to woman. The man is not commissioned as if he has some natural advantage over her that wins him this "reward". Because it is not a reward at all for him. It is as much a curse for him as for her. Rather her husband, like her, suffers this ignominious self-contradictory limitation of authoritarian rule until the deliverer comes. Rule according to Creation's design is to serve. Yet authoritarian rule by definition prevents the ruler from serving — therefore barring him from effective authority, because he must be served rather than serve "The master sits at the table"; at the same time it requires the woman to serve "But I am with you a servant" the same as Jesus Christ defined leadership — thereby granting her authority a man can never touch but it prevents her from exercising that authority and ruling over him. In God's economy, service is what makes rule valid it is only in the fallen Gentile world that service is marked as second class. Even with Jesus declaring that Service is the way of Kingdom rule, Patriarchs, Elders and Governors insist on defining service as proof of second class inferiority. Complementarity is always the complement the master makes with a well-fitting slave. It is always a self-defeating conundrum for both them: she gains authority but no power to rule he gains rule but no authority to exercise power. It

[235] II Corinthians 3:18 & I Corinthians 12:31.

[236] Matthew 28:18-19; John 14:12-14; 16:12-15. "It's a Holy Spirit Thang, y'all wouldn't understand 'cause y'all didn't know there was a Holy Spirit." Fellow inmate in Fulton County Jail.

[237] Genesis 2:17.

[238] Genesis 3:14-15.

is God's judgment to both punish and preserve from death a sinful society and a groaning creation itself until the revealing of the Son, and his brethren, the children, of God.[239]

8. To survive, humanity would need the guidance of strong central-authoritarian leaders because people are morally incompetent to govern themselves freely from the heart. Yet strong authoritarian leadership can never establish the Kingdom of God in Family, Church or State because creation and mankind were never designed for that sort of rule either to be ruled by it or to be the ruler of it.
9. Traditional government since the fall assumes ethical hearts of stone will forever keep God's people from self-government. Therefore, individuals (governors, leaders, elders, kings, fathers, husbands, priests) are granted power by God to force others to unite with them and to obey their laws and programs enabling the survival and even the marginal success of mankind.
10. Authoritarian government has been the universal experience of all human organization — the power given to those in charge to get their way by threat of punishments, execution, banishment, divorce, or beatings. It is inconceivably Utopian to think that it could be any other way, that is, until Christ.
11. From the beginning it was not so.[240]
12. Jesus said not to organize this way anymore.[241]

D. Authoritarian government is not the opposite of self-government. It is not sinful. It is the external application of God's law which becomes sadly necessary where ethical and judicial maturity of individuals is lacking because the deformity of sin has formed a people lacking the self-control to live God's law from their heart, called by Scripture, "having a heart of stone," or a "hard heart".[242]

1. As martial law is an appropriate form of emergency government in the face of a military or natural disaster, authoritarian government is a necessary form of government appropriate to the crisis brought on when Adam and Eve decided that instead of taking the step to ethical and judicial maturity, they would freeze the moral development of humanity and render mankind morally incompetent, incapable of self-rule, children walking the earth in need of a guiding parent.
2. Though often authoritarian government is unpleasant for the community that lacks the transforming work of the Christ, the alternative is chaos, rape and death.
3. The reason God's law is always thought of in connection with governments that apply, or should apply it; is because that is the best

[239] Romans 8 esp v 22; Daniel 7:18.

[240] Matthew 19:8-9.

[241] Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25.

[242] II Corinthians 3:3, 7.

we can do apart from redemption.

E. Yet, Authoritarian control is not what Jesus taught and it is not what the NT at every point assumes and directs and Jesus did not think that teaching on government alternative would lead to chaos rape and death.

1. The normal power of humanity in which the Creation was designed to operate, is the power of the Holy Spirit speaking through God's Word, directing life from the heart.

a. This life changing power was prayed for by Moses to be exhibited in all God's people not just their rulers, as their only hope for political peace and prosperity.

b. When some elders kept prophesying away from the others, those with Moses immediately understood the political impact of a source of Divine authority not under the control of the central government of Moses and his elders.[243]

c. They begged Moses to stop this unauthorized source of Divine authority since it threatened their own political authority and power to control God . . . that is, they could control people but only if the people thought that they could control God. Such outbursts of prophecy indicated that God was not limited to them.

d. Moses' reply, "*Would that all God's people had His Spirit on them!"* confirmed the lost creation order and the future hope that it would be restored, and that authoritarian government would not be the last word of how the Kingdom of God would govern the earth. Moreover, Moses, recognized that Divine authority is precisely that, Divine, not under His control to start or stop and that is precisely what is needed in each believer to have true government in the earth.

e. This life changing, heart changing power was foreseen by the prophets as the mark of Messiah's government where dead hearts of stone would be turned to living hearts of flesh, ethically transformed, having God's law written on them *"so the increase of His government and of peace would have no end."*[244]

f. Hebrews confirms this transformation as the mark that defines and frees the Christian to mature self-government confirming both Moses' law, his prayer, and Jeremiah's prophesy. Hebrews chides God's people for being so slow to get the implications of who they now are in Christ.[245]

g. These are foundational political passages dealing with the possibility of free self-government when people's hearts are changed, and based on that free association in the tasks now thought of as lying in the authoritarian sphere of the state, the church and the

[243] Numbers 11:24-30.

[244] Isaiah 9:6-7.

[245] Hebrews 5:12-14.

family where leaders force unity of purpose on the people.

2. Yet this mark of the New Covenant, this self-government God promised, this is what the world says will cause anarchy if the power of organizational coercion[246] by a central leader, or committee of leaders, is abandoned and Jesus Christ takes his rightful place in each believer's life. Yes, not just unbelievers, but Authoritarian Christians will argue that it is anarchy for Jesus Christ to rule in the hearts of His people. Say this again until the absurdity of their analysis sinks in. "It is anarchy for Jesus Christ to rule in the hearts of His People." Keep saying it, after a while you will realize that Scripture says the exact opposite. "He has not given you a spirit of fear but of love power and self-control."
3. Anarchy is not the result of Jesus Christ dwelling in His people unmediated by any elite priests or elder's heavy or loving handed control. Neither does anarchy result when Jesus' sacrifice does away with the false alternative atonement of the leaders who somehow claim to atone for the sins of those who submit to them when they are in error.

F. Worldly corporations, organizations and their decrees are a form of power, but they are not where true power lies. In denying organizational power to elders in the Church, God does not deny the leaders of the Church True Oversight of the Bride of Christ, He does not deny True Authority and True Rule with True Power, as some falsely claim this Handbook to argue.[247]

1. Paul can say of the rulers in the Church to Timothy, *"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."* Jesus speaks of the last being first. There is still order, rule and preeminence in the congregation.[248]
2. This True Authority and Power is seen when Paul challenged those disturbing the Corinthian Church. He said, *"my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. . . . Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out,*

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[246] Ephesians 6:9 *"Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening,"* Echoing the very words of Jesus in Luke 22:27, Paul removes the coercive powers of the master from the slave-master authority structure. "*Masters do the same . . ."* the same as what? He is to serve the slave, directing his labor as he would direct God Himself, *"not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man."* how much more is service — the cross — what defines the members, pastors and elders of the Church?

[247] Romans 3:8.

[248] I Timothy 5:17; Mark 10:31,40, 43-45.

not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. *What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?"*[249] Paul's power is not from his office, it is not being backed up by elders or apostles organizationally. His power is God Himself sustaining what he says and does. He calls the congregation at Corinth to judge between him and the false apostles. The congregation is the Matthew 18:17 judge. It is the congregation that passed final judgement in Acts 15.

3. It is this power which Scripture calls the birthright[250] of every Child of God and it is most clearly seen, though not uniquely seen, in those who aspire to be elders whose power in the Holy Spirit is to transform a congregation through laying down their lives and so teach them to establish their own self-government in Christ. This is the greatest power known to man[251] and it is casually cast aside for the mere imitation of power held by kings, patriarchs, elders and priests.

G. This power of a mature congregation which Paul speaks of to the Ephesians in Chapter 4 as the True Authority and Power of the Elders, not as distinct from the power of any believer but as distinct from the fleshly powers of the organizations of men whose whole mode of authoritarian rule in the earth is coming to a close as surely as the rule of kings bowed to the rule of constitutional government. Therefore, it is worth enumerating this power Christ gives to all in His Body of which the rulers in the Church are exemplary, not exclusive examples. The power of Jesus Christ is given to his children, not just their leaders:

1. **The greatest power, and the greatest authentication of authority is the Cross,** "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."*[252] This is the authority Christ said was not limited to the power of His atonement, but was the source of the power for His ministry and behavior, and was to be the pattern for all Christian life, not merely specialized ministry or personal salvation. It is especially how to authenticate the word and actions of those who are set apart to lead. Serving is not the source of authority and power of the master of the house. The master's power and authority is terribly limited to making legitimately enforceable demands on people. When Jesus demanded

[249] I Corinthians 2:4-5; 4:18-20

[250] John 1:13; 3:5-8.

[251] I Timothy 3:1.

[252] Matthew 16:24; John 12:24.

that we operate our lives only by the authority of the servant,[253] He, in black and white, explicitly and intentionally rejects the authority and power of the master at every point that leadership is brought up in the Gospels and the Epistles. He accepts only those things that God does from heaven to verify His word and the word of those who lead in His name.[254]

2. **The power of knowing there is no "Plan B", that it is the power of the Spirit or nothing.** If God is not in the midst of the camp we may as well not go up from here.[255] Jesus said He did not speak His own words or perform His own miracles or presume upon God to back up whatever He said or did. It was the Father who gave him His words and honored His request for miracles.[256] Jesus told His disciples that this same power of God would attend them[257] if by faith they refused to live by any other power or authority which He called the way the *"Nations rule and exercise authority."*[258]
3. **The power of the full armor of God**.[259] The power of never needing to wage Spiritual war with the impotent institutional weapons of the organizational flesh (a king, an executive pastor, a ruling elder, like the nations, power analogous to King Saul's armor) which are of no use against principalities and power and rulers in high places. The law of Moses severely curtailed, institutional power and Samuel 8 and Jesus directly forbade Kings like the nations as utterly inadequate for the rule and dominion of God's people.[260] In forbidding such authority and power, they did not forbid authority or power itself, such as the full armor of God, only that authority and power patterned after the nations which is

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[253] Luke 22:27; Matthew 16:24; Mark 10:43-45. The exclusive term, *"If **any** man,"* excludes from power all who seek another power source, even when it is Peter. When Peter suggests something other than the cross, He becomes Satan's spokesman, Matthew 16:22-23. *"Far be it [the cross] from you, Lord."* There is no Lordship for Jesus Himself if he follows a different road of power (Philippians 2:1-11). Paul says, *"Therefore,"* making clear that there is no other power source, no other form of authentication of one's word or life; No valid organization of leaders calling themselves servants while empowering themselves as masters. Literally, the Devil is in the details (Matthew 16:23). You think elders are servants? Read the details of the powers they have granted themselves in any book of Church order.

[254] Acts 1; Luke 22:25ff; John 13-17; Exodus 33:15; John 5:19; 6:38; John 12:49; Matthew 18:19; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13; John 15:7; John 15:16; John 16:23–24; James 1:5-6; John 5:14-15; I John 3:22.

[255] Acts 1; Luke 22:25ff; John 13-17; Exodus 33:15.

[256] John 5:19; 6:38; John 12:49.

[257] Matthew 18:19; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13; John 15:7; John 15:16; John 16:23–24; James 1:5-6; John 5:14-15; I John 3:22.

[258] Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:43; Luke 22:25.

[259] Ephesians 6:10-20.

[260] Deuteronomy 17:14-20; I Samuel 8:7, 16-22; Luke 22:25.

worthless to get at the heart of our conflict.[261]

4. **The power of successfully discipling an Ephesians 4 congregation** who are maturely able to distinguish sound from unsound doctrine, love the brethren in purity and unity.[262] The powers of an Ephesians 4 congregation are the next three points:
5. **The Power of the unity of mind and heart of the congregation**[263] on each issue as it arises based on personal conviction not the external coercion of those in charge.[264] This is the power that comes when all the congregation is led by these elders only as far as each member is willing to follow them in Christ. It is precisely this responsible freedom of the Congregation in Christ to review each matter for themselves that causes them to be a congregation not of conscripts required to submit, or of fearful children who are afraid not to submit, or the arrogant lords demanding all to submit to them, but of free men and women who freely submit only because they are mature spiritual adults who are as deeply committed to the goals and purposes and vision of the Church of Jesus Christ as the elder they follow. And no power on earth can force them to submit, which is why the New Testament appeals for their submission but nowhere empowers those who lead to enforce it.[265]
6. **The power that comes when the leader respects this mature liberty and obligation in Christ of each believer to judge all**

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[261] Colossians 2:16-23, esp. v23.

[262] Acts 15:10-22

[263] General fact — most of the passages calling for submission are in the context of "how to achieve unity" or "what unity looks like." They are an appeal to the individual believer, both believers who follow and believers who lead alike, to submit to each other because their self-government is the government of the Church. No passage grants the authority to those who lead to enforce unity or submission. Unity comes from voluntary submission to those in authority on a case by case basis coupled with the voluntary submission of those who lead to the ones they lead. There is no New Testament call to unity based on the authority of the one in charge to enforce it, only on the authority and power of each believer to seek and affirm that unity when they judge it righteous. This power exists regardless of their role in the body of Christ. This is a stone-cold fact of exegesis. See the following two footnotes.

[264] Philippians 2:2, 12; Ephesians 6:6; Galatians 1:8, 2:11; I Timothy 5:20.

[265] Calling for Submission: Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 2:13-17, 5:5; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-3; John 13:12-17; Matthew 19:30, 20:16, 25-28. Making submission the hallmark of every Christian especially those thought of as ruling: Ephesians 5:2 (the cross, for everyone), v21 (everyone), v22 (Wives), v25 (Husbands), 6:1 (Children), v4 (Fathers) v5 (slaves), v9 (Masters). The alternative to mutual submission in any given situation is Tyranny if you are the leader or lawless Anarchy if you are a follower.
Verses empowering anyone in authority to enforce submission: silence.
The only disciplinary power in the New Testament is the power of the congregation (Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 5) and the individual (Luke 10:18) to call upon God to deal with error and then act upon that call and walk away.

things. The willingness to wait on any issue until all are convinced is a power that dwarfs the mere power of a ruling elder to dictate to conscripts who are forced to obey. This is the power that flows from respecting each believer's standing in Christ to confront the elder to his face.[266] Yet their grace in how they come to a unified purpose.

7. **The Power of the ministry of the word and prayer manifested in suffering service** and its fruit in mature Christians who are not blown about by every wind of doctrine, are building themselves up in love, and do not need the external punishments of a father but rather freely walk with their leaders as spiritually mature friends[267] addressing issues, not as children who are themselves the problem needing to be babysat.[268]
8. **The power of the conviction and support of the Holy Spirit in the life and testimony of the leader** as he is seen and submitted to on a case by case basis[269] by all who have known the elder — his testimony and his track record over time.[270]
9. **The power to lead a people each one of whom has the ethical judicial maturity and authority to turn the keys of the kingdom of heaven,** to shake the dust off their feet and depart in judgment from those who refuse instruction. Paul gives Timothy the example of handing them over to Satan to learn not to sin. Jesus tells the congregation that they can pronounce judgment on those who refuse to heed their judgment in groups of two and three, if necessary, not just when everyone is there together. These are the weapons of spiritual warfare given by Jesus to His Church from the least of them to the greatest — these manifest the power of God backing up his people's word.[271] Yes this is definitely a pipedream if producing permanent children is the best God can do.
10. **The power of an overabundance of the fruit of the Spirit in walk and speech.**[272] A people able to earnestly contend for the faith without bitterness, rancor and malice.[273] And so calmly define issues which may lead to a peaceful separation, or may lead to a deeper understanding of the faith and unity in love for all.
11. **The power of the gifts of the Holy Spirit** as they are manifested in the prophetic and pastoral clarity of teaching and argument, that cuts to the core of any issue producing an Ephesians 4 congregation.[274]

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[266] I Corinthians 2:15: Gal 2:14; I Tim 5:1.

[267] John 15:14-17; James 2:23; Exodus 33:11; Genesis 12:1-4.

[268] Acts 6:4; Hebrews 5:12.

[269] I Corinthians 2; I Timothy 5:20, 6:1-7.

[270] I Corinthians 2; I Timothy 5:22, 6:1-7.

[271] Luke 10:11; Matthew 18:15-20; I Timothy 1:20-23.

[272] Galatians 5.

[273] Ephesians 4:31-32.

[274] Philippians 2:1-2; 4:1-9; Eph 4:11ff; Hebrews 4:12; I Corinthians 14:24.

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12. **The power of sound *"instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."***[275] The instruction may be vigorous comparing it to a good fight; or it might be exhausting but unquenchable such as two years arguing in the Hall of Tyrannus; or it may be disastrous such as when Paul was stoned and thrown out of town or adrift at sea on a shipwreck for the third time. But power is not found in suing or judging in courts of elders and then those elders binding the consciences of the congregation who are spectators at best to the "real" power of the organization of leaders.[276] Such tribunals have yet in 2,000 years to produce "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith."
13. **The power of intercession**, to pray and entreat God for all men knowing He is a God who hears and acts.[277]
14. **The power of Good Character**, "*Be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, able to teach, respectable, hospitable, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money, one who manages his own household well, [or else] how will he take care of the church of God? not a new convert, having a good reputation with those outside.*"[278]
15. **The power of godly self-discipline and teaching sound doctrine,** is how Paul tells Timothy to overcome attacks on the Church from those who "*depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, to nourish those who fall away into various sorts of error.*" Reread that. It is the incredibly evil assault Paul warned Timothy of. It is no light thing that Paul's command is not to institute courts made up of elders who put such evil on trial, and so purge it from the people that they might fear. But rather, *"pointing out these things to the brethren, . . .nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine . . . have nothing to do with worldly fables . . . discipline **yourself** for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. . . . we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. Prescribe and teach these things."*[279]
16. **The power to overcome all who look down on the calling and aspiration to be an elder or who oppose the authority of those**

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[275] I Timothy 1:3; 5:22.

[276] Here, as throughout, this handbook, there is no footnote to find something that is not in Scripture, namely the authority of elders to preside in elder-courts which issue elder-judgments binding non elders. See footnote #172.

[277] Acts 6:4; I Timothy 2:2,8; James 5:17.

[278] I Timothy 3:3-6; Eph 5:25.

[279] I Timothy 4:1-2; 6-7,8,9,11.

who lead is to "*in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."*[280] How the elder speaks, acts, loves and believes is the weapon of that elder's warfare, not his authority to convene a court and put an enemy of the faith on trial "in a loving way."

17. **At this point stop.** Reflect on these Scriptures in the context of the power of government. So many of these things are taught as ideal character traits. People assume that they are merely personal ideals for any elder to aspire to or exhibit; job requirements perhaps. But this falls far short of Scripture's point. The power of the elder is not found in the special powers his "office" gives him to control the Church. His "office" is his job description, not the powers of a niche in the organizational bureaucracy which he fills. In reality, it is the character of the elder in Christ with the law written on his heart that is his power. He needs none other. There is none other. ***The Cross is at war with all other sources of power. "Satan" is Jesus' summary of alternative powers and paths.*** Read Timothy and Titus again, see how with everything that opposes them, which they must confront and overcome, the "character traits" are in reality the weapons of their warfare, their true power, to the pulling down of strongholds. It is not their office or his office as Apostle that Paul ever appeals to. Paul never says their power and authority is to convene a tribunal and judge those in error. These powers of the elder are for all God's children.
18. **The power to overcome all things is the power of a slave, or child, or Jesus Himself** which means Church leaders having no special powers at all to set policy or enforce it with any power other than the power of the Holy Spirit taking *"pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."*[281] There is no power in a "court" of elders in "session".
19. **The power of the Cross is the power which authorizes, verifies and empowers the life and word of each Christian, and is exemplified in — never limited to — the life and teaching of an elder.** There is no record that a lawsuit, or judging lawsuits, was either called for as the elder's unique office to remedy sin and error in the Church nor is it listed among the weapons, strengths, or powers of elders given to them for dealing with error. EVER. Stop and think about that. Never ever. Yet it is the mainstay of church government ever since.

a. **The only discipline Scripture mentions that elders are to enforce is self-discipline.**

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[280] Timothy 4:12.

[281] I Timothy 4:16.

b. **The only examination is self-examination,**

c. **The only fencing of the table is self-fencing.**

H. In the light of the true power of those who lead the Church, it is worth summarizing what the alternative power sources are, and that they cannot be found in the NT except in warnings about how ***not*** to proceed because they do not empower a leader in the Church in his call to rule, govern or disciple a mature congregation:

1. It is not judicial process that produces a mature congregation — that is what the nations do.
2. It is not executive enforcement ruling over them like the nations, imposing God's law from the top down, from the outside in which is not how a congregation is discipled to maturity — that is what the nations do to handle people incapable of being discipled, you force them to submit.
3. It is not legislating and enforcing the congregation's submission to "good" policies — that is what gentiles do.
4. It is not controlling the sacraments, the worship, or the teaching to be sure only the worthy receive them and so avoid damnation — that is what a pagan priest might do.
5. ***The Apostles and Jesus appeal to none of these as the special powers of the Elders.***

I. The power of the rulers are the powers God grants to each child in His Kingdom, to the Least in the Kingdom of Heaven, as much as to the Greatest.

1. The rule of the Holy Spirit writing God's law on the heart of each believer, does not result in anarchy. Yes, Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel[282] were utopian when they first wrote that this would be the mark of the New Covenant. But Jesus and Hebrews[283] were not utopian when they said it ***is*** the mark of the New Covenant and it means an end to the necessity of Authoritarian rule in the earth as the only way to stave off chaos, disaster and death because of the hardness of their hearts.
2. The cross, submission to truth, the atonement, and Pentecost are not obscure doctrines buried somewhere in the bowels of the Bible. The rule of the Holy Spirit writing God's law on the heart of each believer, results in the realization of God's plan from the foundation of the world to bring freedom, productivity, peace and joy to the transformation and unpacking of all the earth has to offer. It is everywhere written and assumed. For God so loved the world . . . every rock, tree, amoeba, molecule, quark and person of his creation.

[282] Numbers 11:25-29; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20 & 36:26.

[283] John 14:16,26 & 15:7-10,26 &16:13; Hebrews 8:10-11 & 10:16.

J. The powers of Authoritarian Government are too weak, too insubstantial, too surface, too far from the heart of the matter to bring the change that God's Kingdom requires. And yet they give the illusion of being the way of strength and the illusion that compared to ***"real"*** coercive power of organizations, the simple reliance on the Holy Spirit and God's law in men's hearts is "merely spiritual," "merely ministerial," and "possibly" legalistic, not a reliance on grace, hopelessly utopian. Knowing this to be false, reformed Christians have argued that the power of the Church is ministerial and spiritual only, and yet they empower their elders to exercise the powers of the priest thinking that because the congregation votes for them, and they work in a committee and presbytery, that somehow their actual powers are less priestly than any priest, bishop Cardinal or Pope of the Catholic Church. They still go to the high places of the board of organizing controllers for their authority and certification no less than any priest. They still give back to themselves unique powers that their theology flatly denies them.[284]

[284] Westminster Confession of Faith Chapters 1-24 lay out basic Christian Theology, the Doctrines of God, Man, Creation, Scripture, Salvation etc. In these chapters there is absolutely no mention of any organized form of the Church having a necessary role in the matter. And of course, there could be no mention. If it were mentioned it would make a human organization as important to one's salvation as the mediation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It would provide a place for that organization of priests in the order of salvation. In Chapter 25 and 26 where the Church is defined, there is no mention of the Organized form the Church takes. This is not an oversight. For the Reformation it was rank heresy to place any human person or organization into the order of salvation, that was 95% of their argument and break with Rome. With no explanation, this changes after Chapter 26 when the government of the Church and authority of elders is discussed. Suddenly they have an exclusive role controlling the sacraments, doctrine and teaching of the local Church. There is the organization of elders functioning as priests with the elimination of all "priestly" terminology. They offer no theological reason for this departure from their technical theological condemnation of exactly that Papist practice of Roman Catholic Priests who put men in control of the Church who have powers the unordained Christian does not have. It is a pragmatic blind eye that Reformed Elders from then until today have never stopped to even think of the unevenness of this treatment of ecclesiology in their creedal documents much less question whether they will go with their soteriology, or with their ecclesiology.

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PART III – Appendixes and studies

Appendix A

A. Wycliffe's Vision

"So," he said, looking intently at his friend. "You do not believe fundamental change and growth in human character is possible. Yet you live in a world so transformed by the Gospel already as to be unrecognizable by any 1st or even 13th Century Christian. Let me just point out one small change that transformed the world in a mere 350 years."

And so, we sat together over glasses of Joel Gott and talked about John Wycliffe, an English revolutionary so obscure even his name can be spelled a dozen different ways, it is so irrelevant today to get him right. He is best known for his Bible translation that within a hundred and fifty years was rendered archaic because of the linguistic transformation of England coming into its own as a separate independent European power, in part due to the movement and vision he fostered.

Though his name and what he did is believed utterly irrelevant to our modern world, all we see around us was made possible by his vision, which was hopelessly utopian in his day . . . just like you say mine is.

Join him for a minute as he looked out on his world.

As you look at his world with him, remember he, unlike you, knew nothing of what was to happen in the next 600 years. To him and to the people of his day, everything was the way things "always were" and "always would be". It is not that they ignored the soon to be reality of a printing press, it is that such a thing was unthinkable! It is not so much that it is foolish to imagine that something could change the world as we know it so radically as to erase every limit, boundary and possibility that is taken for granted, it is that it is almost impossible to live life in that unrealized "reality" if even the thought of it were possible. Though we dream from time to time about Utopias, or how things ought to be in family, church, or state, we do not let such dreams get in the way of reality.

For Wycliffe, there were two indomitable powers, the government of the state and the government of the Church of Rome. Both were, without apology, authoritarian absolutist. Both had experienced relative success or failure based on the strength and authority of the man whose hand was on the helm. Both were thoroughly autocratic and both fully confident that any form of government without a strong man at the helm would lead to hopeless instability, slaughter, starvation and death. Though much maligned, Machiavelli put this conviction of human government down in print one hundred years after Wycliffe lived. He argued in, ***"The Prince,"*** that ruthlessly firm autocratic rule was necessary to avoid the far greater horror of civil wars, and social chaos — the squalor, starvation,

rape and riot that inevitably results without that firm external legal power in control of our lives. From the least to the greatest, Machiavelli's views have tended to provide the conviction and rationale to defend the need for the central power of government sufficient to control you, collectivize you, regulate you, centrally plan you and so protect you from those who would harm you.

The world had never known anything other than some version of a central government to rule/control the people . . . "for their own good." In the four hundred years following Wycliffe, both Church and State would take a radical transforming step, directly due to Wycliffe's ministry which, in the following centuries, grew far beyond anything he could have possibly imagined, though its effect and impact was precisely as he predicted in his preface to his Bible Translation.

There were two political power structures in Europe, the Noble and the Priestly, financed by a growing though still statistically insignificant group of merchants. Under them lived the other 95% of the people. These serfs and peasants were illiterate, living only forty short brutish years. The repeatable words used to describe them were, "Common", "Ignorant", "Unwashed", "Starving," "Rude", "Filthy", "Foul", "Ugly", "Beshiten," "Ignoble", and "Superstitious". The unrepeatable words are as long a list but I will not scorch your ears with hate speech. The general attitude of the Nobles and Priests towards them matched the words they used to describe them. They were considered so devoid of any wholesome character, charm, or potential for anything, that even Karl Marx, the self-styled champion of the working classes, four hundred years later, wrote a letter to his patron Engels telling him that these peasants are entirely unfit to lead a revolution of the workers, or even to live in a land ruled by the proletariat, which is why he said Russia would not be a good place to organize the "People's Revolution," They were so devoid of potential that Marx's only solution was to, "liquidate them". Better for everyone to simply "kill them." (His words.)

While slaughtering them as a class was certainly not a thought shared by the intellectual, social, religious, political, and economic elite of 1350, the conviction that serfs and peasants are hopelessly worthless, ignorant, filthy, crude and useless except for the most menial of tasks, was their inescapable conclusion, which if you do not share it means that you cannot picture them as they were, you only picture them as the romantic imagination of the movies you have seen falsely portrays peasants and serfs.

Indeed, you have never met a serf, and will never meet one.

The despised 95% of society have all been transformed as a result of Wycliffe's vision into not only the people you know today and have grown up with, but you yourself are most likely a descendant of these miserable brutish people who represent the majority of mankind

throughout most of time. But! There are no serfs and peasants in the West. **They have been transformed by the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit as Wycliffe said they would be.**

Wycliffe was one of the intellectual elites in England. England's leading scholar and vocal critic. He was sponsored by the most powerful political figure in England at the time, John of Gaunt, First Duke of Lancaster. His theological works described what any Reformer one hundred years later would easily recognize as standard Reformation thinking — except the Reformation was not even dreamt of while he was writing. It is true that his political writing thoroughly supported the monolithic power of the State. He provided theological reasons for the state to dismantle the monstrosity the Church had become in his day and urged them to keep its preachers and prelates beggars. Why? His statism? No, he realized he could not take on both tyrannical powers at once. Between the two, he chose Church reform as the most important knowing that, in time, if God's people in the Church could transform their relationship to the world and then the structural transformation of the State would inevitably follow.

He was right.

The question Wycliffe faced was not then, nor is it now, "How will I change my world?" The first question to be addressed in his day, our day, and any day, is, "Why change the world at all? Indeed, can I change it?" Everyone at whatever period of human history they live in cannot help but believe in their bones that, "It all is what it is, and it is as we know it today." The more perceptive "recognize" the "fact" that the world as we know it is in a precarious balance: it's easy to make it worse but whimsically impossible to fundamentally improve it. Above all, it is almost impossible to think of the future in terms substantially different from the present. This is why people in general will applaud you for being a visionary, they will applaud you for your stimulating entertainment, and they will applaud you for the changes you think important. They will agree that, "things are a mess and need a-changin". . . but they will seldom follow you no matter what the Bible says. If you get serious, they will seriously oppose you. Not so much because they disagree that what you say is "true," "better" or even "wrong," but because the balance of a culture at every point in history is impossible in their mind to actually change and to even try would bring disaster, blasphemy and every evil thing. They will find any and every way to obstruct you in the name of God and decency. ***Any*** alternative to the world as we know it is truly and literally unthinkable to most people. It's the Devil they know (all too often in the Biblical sense.)

Fundamental change never comes from persuading those functionally invested the world as it is. It comes from actually changing something in that world which keeps things the way they are. Consider:

horses and buggies exchanged for cars; telephones replaced letters and visits; cellphones replaced televisions, telephones, movies and intimate exchanges; Internet replaces conversations, fellowship, research and libraries; and so on. In Wycliffe's case, he said, let Scripture change the heart and the Holy Spirit will change the world itself.

It is this way with forms of government. What changed English and Continental forms of government was not the theoreticians, though they had their place. What changed Europe was pastoral discipleship transforming the people themselves who were governed: that 95% who were incompetent dull serfs and peasants. They were changed at every level from bottom to top. So radical the change, that the English Commoner (that filthy, ragged, short lived, brutish, ignorant peasant) became an educated reformation warrior in every part of his culture, eventually leading to a reckoning that took the head off not merely King Charles, but in the next two hundred years, off the concept of monarchy itself as a viable form of government.

And so, we come to Wycliffe. He wrote theoretical books and tracts about what the Church and state should be like — Church and State theory: you know, books about what the 3% who could actually read should believe about themselves and about their world in order to change it. Today even if translated they would make heavy going. Wycliffe realized at the end of his life that they were not going to be the agent of change.

These treatises — as radical as any Calvin or Luther or Francis Schaffer or Van Till wrote — did not change England, and in time, Europe and the World. No one ever heard of them.

Wycliffe, himself, it is clear from reading him, did not know what exactly the change would be, but he did know that because the Bible is true, the Holy Spirit is real, then these together in a man's heart would make him and the world unrecognizable to anyone who lived in his day, if they could only read God's Word with Spirit-opened eyes.

He proposed a simple act: translate the Bible into the Common Tongue; that is, the vulgar; the language actually spoken by the English. If he had been able to post his intent on Facebook, you would reply, "LOL, take ideas in a language that no one could understand or read (Greek and Hebrew) and translate them into another language that not only can no one can read, but no one wants to read (the everyday vulgar English that the peasants spoke)."

Did this vision grip him from his early days? Did it occur to him late in life when he looked at the futility of what he had written and the intellectual battles he had fought? The answer is romantic, but irrelevant. The fact is, late in life he began work on the First English Bible. He

justified that work by his vision of the transformation made possible by the Holy Spirit speaking in the Word to the heart and life of each Christian.

If he needed confirmation that he was on the right track, it came in the level of opposition and hatred, worse than he had ever known. Were it not for John of Gaunt, the first Duke of Lancaster, he would have been burned by the Church for pure heresy and the diabolical egalitarian Utopian, Anarchic idea that the serf is changeable; that the serf can be transformed; that the serf would do anything but become an ungovernable mob if they ever got their hands on the Holy Words of God Himself and murder and rape the men of wisdom and rule authorized by God to run the world. So deeply seated was their hatred and fear that though they could not burn him alive at the stake back in 1380, they did dig up his grave one hundred years later and burn his anathematized bones. But it was too late, the Holy Spirit and Scripture were out of their bag.

The church leaders hated Wycliffe, because, like us, they could only see the future in terms of the world they lived in. They could not grasp the fact that a transformed serf is no longer a serf at all. In fact, a serf transformed by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word of God in his heart is a threat to all power systems that are designed to work with only the dull and empty masses, those Marx called the "lumpen proletariat," which could only be managed by an elite ruling class of Nobles, bureaucrats and today government regulators.

If you can see the world as all who lived in 1375 saw it in their day, you can understand that your skepticism for his plans is no different from the skepticism of Church leaders today asking:

Why Translate the Bible into a language almost nobody of any distinction (the 3%) considered a legitimate language for any person of gentle birth to even speak at all?

Why translate the Bible into a language that nobody who speaks it can read?

Why translate the Bible if it is impossible to handwrite enough copies of it for more than a small handful of illiterates to possess in their miserable hovels?

Why translate the Bible for people who are incapable of grasping its simplest concepts when they are painstakingly explained to them? What could they possibly do with a conceptual world that is hopelessly beyond them?

If the whole world had Down Syndrome, and were managed by an elite 3% who took care of everyone, why translate anything at all? If a Downs could be taught to read, a big "IF", how would it help him? So too the serf, the peasant of 1370.

So too, your estimation of the common Christian today, surely the Holy Spirit can do no more to change us today than he could do to change the Christian serfs and peasants of 1350.

Of course, today, you know that once the Bible was in translation, people would crave to be taught to read it. You know that in sixty years, Guttenberg would invent a device that would put copies of the Bible in everyone's hands. You know that once people began to read and understand God's Word, their whole understanding of who they were and what they could do changed. You know that the very structures of the political, intellectual and scientific world would be transformed by these people who only two, three, four generations earlier, with all honesty and no prejudice, could only be described as, "Common", "Ignorant", "Unwashed", "Starving," "Rude" "Filthy", "Foul", "Ugly", "Ignoble", "Superstitious".

Yes, you know this. *But no one in Wycliffe's day "**knew**" this.* They only knew back then of Wycliffe's impossibly dangerous scheme of Bible translation. They knew of their future as much as you know of your future. When you listen to the rest of what I have to say, will you too say with the Church of 1350, "Impossible! Entertaining? Yes. Whimsically hopeful? Yes. But impossible! Impossible because freedom destroys the free. Such a vision of God's Word and God's Holy Spirit would permit every heresy. It would break down all lawful authorities and powers which hold heretics in check. It would corrupt and destroy the very people who would be "liberated" or "empowered" by these ideas from God's Word! We need rulers to control us!"

What do you think about yourself when you find yourself picking up the same stones to throw, and the same firewood they picked up to burn Wycliffe's vision when you are presented with the idea that today, in your day 2018 or whenever you live, you who are reading this. Is this what you say when someone tells you like Wycliffe told them that the Holy Spirit and God's word are not finished freeing and transforming the life of the world for whom Christ died.[285]

One bedrock fundamental of Wycliffe's day, and of our day, is that people cannot change and get better as a whole. You are convinced, that, "Even if the Holy Spirit Himself were to indwell them[286] … even if the Word of God is in their hands and dwells richly in their heart[287] . . . even if the Law of God is written on their hearts[288] . . . even if the Bible itself says all that, transformational change of God's people and the

[285] John 3:16; Matthew 23:31
[286] Numbers 11:29; Hebrews 8:11
[287] Colossians 3:16
[288] Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26; Jeremiah 31:29-33; Hebrews 8:10.

earth[289] through them is impossible. Not even God can do it! We are what we are. Original sin and its attending curse is what it is."

In the end, wherever you find yourself in history, you will, along with everyone else in that age, believe that people are what you experience them to be and they will never be capable of accomplishing, or living, or becoming, or achieving more or less than the people of that age imagine is possible given what we all "know" our limits to be. And of course, God must be just as limited as we are.

Wycliffe in answer to these same questions was convinced that the serf, the ignorant, boorish, short-lived ploughboy, with God's word in his heart could be transformed into someone capable of self-government, wisdom and trust. That is, someone who did not need the strong hand of the Lord of the Manor and even the King of England to keep him under strict control as if they were his true father . . . for his and everyone's own good. Above all, Wycliffe believed that such a ploughboy would need no Priests to control him through mediating Grace for him. That ploughboy would in time have no need to call any man Father, or Rabbi, or Teacher, for he would be taught by God.

He wrote for the first time in human history a political statement of something that had only been written before by Moses, Jeremiah, Joel, Peter, the Author of the Book of Hebrews, and Jesus Christ in the Upper Room at the end of his earthly ministry.

When Moses was confronted by men who were prophesying apart from his control and direction, his key men urged him to make them stop, to recognize the potential for political division and riot if men are permitted to be a source of God's Word apart from the control of the Church or State. To which Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" He saw the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in the heart and mouth of every man, woman, and child to be ***the*** necessary ingredient of the Kingdom of God on Earth, not a threat to it. The Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh is only a threat to the Simon the Sorcerers of the world[290] that is, those who fancied themselves as the elite ones who control God's Kingdom by controlling His Word and Spirit.

When Jeremiah envisioned what the New Covenant person would look like, he said, "In that day, no one will need anyone to teach him, 'know the Lord' for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest."[291]

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[289] John 3:16; Matthew 28:18-20;

[290] Numbers 11, Acts 8:9-24

[291] Jeremiah 31:34

When Joel foresaw the Holy Spirit of God being poured out on all flesh as the sign of the last days fulfillment of God's people and Peter said on Pentecost, "This which you see is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel."[292] This Church then and today is that longed for reality.

The writer of Hebrews quoted Jeremiah at length beyond this small excerpt and said that this is the day Jeremiah spoke of. The coming of Christ is the Sabbath the world awaited. These are the Christians — the garden variety common every-day Christians — who fulfill that Word.[293] As Paul said, they have no need of a pedagogue, a teacher for children, they are adults capable of self-government.[294] The purpose of elders is not to be a pedagogical external disciplinary or protective force but like Jesus, a teacher, mentor, a discipler of mature adults who lay down their lives.

Another 1,300 years later, Wycliffe stated the political possibility of a people who had direct access to God's Word in their own language: hidden in their own hearts, transforming their lives, filled with God's Holy Spirit, making them a people as a body politic to be sufficiently self-governed so as to make possible a ***"government of the people, by the people and for the people."*** Yes, it was Wycliffe who said that in his introduction to his translation of the Bible into English in 1385. He saw the world-transforming possibility of the Holy Spirit speaking through the word to each believer who took the name of Christ, none in need of intermediaries between them and God to control their lives either in the government of the Church or, in time, in the government of the State as well.

If you can see your world as Wycliffe saw his, it will help you understand that what you feel in your bones about the possibility of fundamental change, is false even as what his critics felt in their bones about the danger of what he proposed was utterly false. What you think of as the limits of honesty, morality, truth and action of the world as you know it is no more the limit of what God will do with our world, than it was God's limit in 1370, in 400 or in 32 or in 1400 BC. Our current world is not the limit of the best we can hope that God wants to make of us. You may think that the current mode of governance in Church and State is necessary to control humankind as you know them to be — as you know yourself to be — that it is unalterably necessary to protect freedom, truth, and justice, and to prevent disaster for all. But that was not what Wycliffe thought in the 1370's and it is not what you should think in whatever year you read these words from now to the end of time itself.

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[292] Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17

[293] Hebrews 4, 5 & 11. Matthew 1. The Word of God made flesh is at birth, is the dawn of God's Sabbath in History.

[294] Galatians 3:24-26.

In reality, what must be learned from Wycliffe is that government is the solution to a problem. Government (wherever found) will only be as heavy handed as the people think it needs to be based on their level of ability to freely govern their own affairs. In Wycliffe's day the level of people's ethical knowledge and judgment was such that it seemed necessary to all that a heavy handed central authority was necessary to maintain order and defend freedom such as it was. It made common sense that there must be an empowered elite society of Nobles authenticated by royal blood equipped to run things for everyone's good ordained by God Himself!

In the Church, though the structure was a bit different, this same elitist idea of a hierarchy of Priests authenticated not by royal blood but by their relationship to the Pope (Father) as the source of truth, authority and peace for society was the bedrock assumption of society.

After the Reformation, after Wycliffe's translation project (magnified by a thousand translators printed into millions of books) took hold, the people did change. Their level of personal ethics and judgment matured. They could be involved directly in the government of Church and State without descending into a mob. They threw off the now unnecessary bondage of the Fatherhood of Priests and Aristocrats. The basic lot of every member of society improved. How they were governed externally changed as radically as their hearts of stone changed to hearts of flesh internally.

Do not misunderstand, Government is not an artificial construct that you can change like clothes as you wish. The corporate government of Church or State is always based on the general consensus of how people think they work together best. That is, how much freedom they should have before their liberty becomes a threat both to them and to those in power.

Government is what human kind from creation was wired to exercise first in themselves, and then with each other. It is an inescapable solution to the problem of living together. There is no such thing as a nongoverning human being, or an organizationless, or leaderless society. Therefore, successful exercise of our humanity requires that enough people must understand the problems posed by life in society, in sufficiently similar terms and understand the solution — their specific government — as a reasonable solution that is generally agreeable to enough people to sustain it.

While the Curse reigned in the earth from Genesis 3:16 until the Cross of Jesus Christ, we governed by ordaining a group of leaders to control us religiously, politically and in our families. Every age has had its theory of proper government and the one unchanging point in common was that someone or some group should have the special power to force

all others to do what it said. Changing that gut sense of how things work to protect and enable us all to be free is not an idle task for an afternoon.

Only if it is possible for people to change from the heart, internally, will it be possible and necessary for their external governments to change with them. This is true regardless of who holds the seats of power in that government, or how it is structured, or who wants the change.

In the New Covenant, the Priesthood has changed. It is no longer a hierarchy of specialist-elites set apart as mediators between God and man. When the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change in the form of government. That is, government also will reflect the level of freedom a people can responsibly manage based on their unmediated, internal self-government.

This is precisely the horror that the Pharisees warned of when they got wind of what Jesus was up to. It is the horror that the Roman Catholic Church warned the world of concerning Wycliffe: You must keep God's Word out of the hands of the Commoners lest they discover that they and none other, are the only priests spoken of in the New Covenant, lest they attempt through egalitarian chaos to impose the rule of the mob, lest they vainly imagine themselves capable of freedom, lest they introduce every heresy known to man, lest society breaks down and all morality with it.

This is the problem created in our social and political world when people believe that in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God Himself dwells richly in Word and truth in each common Christian who to us today seems so similar to the unchangeable ploughboy of Wycliffe's day — so desperately in need of a governor to tell him when, where, and how to know the Lord.[295]

Ezekiel asked the same question we ask: "Can these bones be made alive with merely the Word of God and the breath of the Holy Spirit in Ezekiel's day? in Jesus' day? in Wycliffe's day? in our day? And if made alive will they be nothing more than a zombie apocalypse? Or is God through His prophetic Word and Spirit creating new possibilities along with the new people he is bringing to life?"

If human kind were static; if there were no end goal, no Plan of God for the Earth, to which we journey as God's people from Creation to the end of time; if what we are today; If both the good and the bad, is all we will ever be; if everything is up to date in Kansas City; if they really have gone as far as they can go; if turning the radiator on whenever they want heat is as much as can be expected of human fruitfulness and multiplication and of the redemption of Christ; then Jesus would be absurd to command that government as human kind has always known it —

[295] Ephesians 1

government by the greatest among us, albeit with checks and balances — is not the way He wants **His** people to govern themselves.

The presupposition of this book is not that we can today describe exactly what God has in mind or how he wants us to organize ourselves. It is not faith in some egalitarian vision which denies either the differences between people and gender, or even a denial of the distinctives which call for leadership and submission to it.

The presupposition of this book is not that all other forms of government are mistaken or evil or compromises of God's word. In fact, so far is it from these things, even if every word of this book were true, that would not mean that you and I have the growth in grace sufficient to live in such a Church as Christ envisioned, any more than the Israelites had grown sufficiently in grace to inherit the promise of the Land though they saw its goodness with their own eyes from the Desert.

The presupposition of this book is that the Promised Land is here. It is the promise that growth in the maturity of Grace and Truth is possible where the Spirit of God is and where His Word dwells richly, that this transformation in how we govern ourselves is **inevitable**.

The presupposition of this book is that as God's people grow in grace. That what His people did in the Upper Room and then with the Disciples in that first generation is actually possible. We are not inventing something if we try to be faithful to their vision, it is the church after the Apostles — in opposition to the Apostles — who have invented the alternative to the rule of the Holy Spirit. Wycliffe's "Government of the people by the people and for the people" is more than just a hope of representative government, whether the rule of elders we elect, or the rule of congressmen and presidents we elect. It would be ridiculous to think that Wycliffe or Scripture prophesied a specific form of constitutional government. It is rather a visionary statement of what Jesus commanded in the Upper Room on the night he was betrayed, you might say his last normal night on earth as they once knew it before the dawning of the Sabbath.

The presupposition of this book is that Jesus opened the door in the Upper Room to the possibility of organizing a government on a foundation other than finding "the greatest among you" and granting them power to enforce the submission of the not so great among you for a period of time (or life). These words in the context of the rest of Scripture show that He did not prescribe a particular form of that government, that night. Rather He commanded that we seek a form of government that is utterly founded on and consistent with self-government under His Spirit and Word guiding the individual's life. This kingdom from the heart is to be the basis of further corporate union and government church, state, or family. This is why He turned government from "the greatest" among you into a government of "the least" among you (which, if you reflect for a

moment, is one of the key notes of His entire ministry, His answer to John the Baptist's skepticism, His answer to the Pharisees' elitism, His central theme in the Sermon on the Mount, his words on who should govern whenever the disciples asked who was the greatest — who would rule when he had gone — His last words on government in the Upper Room.) He was not addressing the character of the governor. He was cutting his governors off from the worldly power of coercion, control and externally imposed discipline and control of the spiritual life of His congregation. He would not leave them powerless He would merely take away the organizational illusion of power and grant to them the true world changing power of the Holy Spirit poured out on even the least esteemed among us as fully as the greatest: to persuade and convince based on the integrity of life and word and the power and testimony of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word alone. He did this because He foresaw that someday, the burden of government, of freedom itself, would be the daily responsibility of each and every individual — *not* the responsibility of an elite few guardians ad litem in mediatorial or representative place of God's people.

Society, the Church, the world, can only be governed as freely as the people are themselves personally able to govern themselves freely. It is the ideal Jesus pointed us toward in the Church: ***His command was not to adopt this or that form of external government which is why there is literally nothing even vaguely like a book of Church order in the Bible or a discussion of forms of government; it was to focus the leadership in the Church not on controlling people externally but on discipleship — maturing people without coercion to control themselves internally from the heart according to God's word.*** Like Wycliffe, He knew that if His church and His leaders could do this, in time the government of the State would follow in an increasing unfolding of freedom consistent with God's Law.

We have been on a two-thousand-year sidetrack by ignoring His words that night, thinking the task of government is to control and protect incompetent minors, rather than to equip and enable a transformed mature people to govern, to protect and to control themselves from every wind of doctrine.

Appendix B

B. The Council Chambers of Hell AD 65

The Council Chamber was in an uproar, I can tell you that. Much of what was said came with such language and filth that I am rarely giving you more than the gist of the conversation and I am sorry if a few words slip past but you must understand who was speaking.

They had fallen back into their criminations and recriminations like, "Whose stupid idea **was** it to kill Jesus in the first place?" No one seemed sure given the disastrous backfire of the plan. They all wanted to take credit for it at the time. But not anymore. It had been, what 20? 25 years?

Lucifer watch bemused, finally he slammed his fist on the table and shouted for silence in a voice that shook us all to the core.

"SILENCE! FOOLS! DOGS! SCUM SUCKING PEEEEGS!"

He had their attention. They all had my attention, what was I doing there? Am I in Hell? I wondered what all these demons would do if they noticed me? Nobody seemed to. Did I fit in? . . . Wait a minute, I shouldn't just fit into Hell, should I? Or maybe I should? No time to wonder about that now. I was here, that was that, and the language was horrific. And . . . wait, was that . . . Seriously? Is that Him?

Lucifer looks slowly around the room.

Starting in a quiet hiss he began, "It's been 15 years. . . ."

"25" squeaked a small interrupting demon. "25 years sir."

". . . 35 years and nothing has worked. We tried putting them in jail. We killed them. We have made them illegal . . . If we do not come up with something soon, Hell is finished."

Beelzebub normally fairly blustery was actually whining, "We tried buying the power over the Holy Spirit with Simon the Sorcerer. But Peter didn't go for it. Then we . . ."

"Wait!" Ba'al interrupted "I might have something you speck of Fly's Dung on a cloister wall!" The intensity in his voice was palpable.

We waited.

"That is how we will overcome them. We will show them how the Holy Spirit Himself can be controlled and what people will be willing to pay to those who control our vaporous enemy most effectively."

"How?" A thousand minor minions asked? In a Babel of voices they tumbled out something like, "They can't control him. Why would anyone want to pay someone to control the Enemy when every one of them from the most pathetic to those reputed to be Apostles themselves have the Holy Spirit controlling ***them*** and with devastating effect? Not one of them understand that leadership requires organizations. And organizations require rulers who control the people. And we can control the rulers effectively but have a much harder time with people." The ones speaking for them shuddered at his narrow escape that day from a newly converted drunk in Corinth whom he had encouraged to get drunk before the love feast.

"Just the other day," they went on "I thought to lure the Corinthians into starting an organization to get control of their church. I thought if I could get some of them drunk before their love feast they would see a need to put some people in charge, get some examinations going, see if they could control who could and who couldn't eat and drink with them, for their own good of course they would think. It was a first step, you know." He whined. "But that damned Paul! Did he tell the elders to pitch in and hold a court or something and be sure everyone is worthy to eat a love feast? No! Did he tell them to get organized, appoint elders and give them the job of sorting out all their problems? NO!" thundered a legion of voices. "The toad sucker told them to have the drunks examine ***themselves!*** to see if they were worthy!!!!! How can we corrupt an organization that is not organized by people who know how to take charge?! All Paul could do was serve them and demand that they grow up. He didn't even demand they follow him because he was an Apostle. Something about the biggest coward, the first to escape over the wall at Ephesus when things got tough, always falling off a boat into the open sea, never the command and control stuff of real leaders."

Ba'al sighed. "That is the plan. What you did was a worthy effort as have been all our efforts at Corinth. But no matter what we did there they refused to solve the problem by putting their greatest men in charge. Instead Paul showed them in each situation how to take care of things without having to empower a leader to whip people in line."

"Aaaargggh!" He gnashed his teeth. "And that is their Achilles Heel, that is what we must change. We must find their best men, their most gifted. And tempt them to lead the way the world has always led."

Azazel spoke up for the first time. "No, you both are onto what must be our long-term plan. But it is not as simple as that. We must put them into a state where the sin of a leader matters. And they don't have leaders whose sins would really ***matter***. I mean look at Peter. Does anyone of them really care if he blows hot one day and cold the next. He betrayed Jesus as much as Judas did. But did anyone care? NOOO! It's because none of their leaders has the power to control the shape of the rest of them. That must be changed. We will not get far in this first generation; they are

all too close to the enemy's power of service to walk away. One of our great success since we seized power of the world . . .

"And Lost it!" squeeked that same devil of interruption and perfection. "Got his Lordship's Ass Kicked right out of Heaven. . ."

Azazel turned his cold desert blue goat-eyes on the little squirt who faded to nothing.

"Yes . . . that's not wise to say around here" He continued. "Once they tasted true power of submitting and loving and preferring one another it is hard for them to go back to the thin gruel of authority and power and disciplining them with elite leaders the way we run Hell." He turned again to the little Devil. "For now, we need to plant seeds. Your seed of perfection might be just what their great ones need" He nodded to the silenced demon.

He looked at the minor minion wondering why they looked so blury, "You, that was good work it is the future. What's your name?"

"Legion my Lord." Oh, no wonder. He's not a "he", he's a they!

"I think you are all on the right track. And clearly you are adequately staffed if we can just keep you away from pork. The plan won't work right now. That love feast has turned every house, every wretched heart, every pub into a temple and our enemy lives in there, in all of em! Organizing around eating and fellowshipping because they, they . . ." He shuddered as if just saying it was a body blow to all he stood for. ". . . they love each other." He paused looking down, "It is damnably difficult to get any real tempting and destruction done. They all come in talking at once with each other solving each other's problems, teaching each other, encouraging each other, sharing gifts with each other, singing making melody, even in their hearts, refining their ideas," His voice was growing in intensity, "subMITTING TO EACH OTHER! PUTTING EACH OTHER FIRST! WE CAN'T EVEN GET THEM INTO AN ARGUMENT THEY KEEP LISTENING TO EACH OTHER AND ITS BECAUSE EVERYWHERE THEY GO THEY ARE ALWAYS EATING TOGETHER, LAUGHING TOGETHER," until his voice was an inarticulatae roar chilling every soul, **"NEVER BEING SOLOMN, NEVER PUTTING ON AIRS, NEVER TRYING TO GET ALL DRESSED UP TO IMPRESS GOD OR ANYONE ELSE. NEVER SILENT LIKE PROPER SUPPLICANTS. NEVER PUTTING PEOPLE IN CHARGE WHO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND CAN CONTROL THE ONES WHO DON'T!!! THOSE DAMNED FEASTS, THOSE DAMNED GIFTS! THUS SAYS THE LORD THIS . . . LET ME PRAY FOR YOU THAT . . . SATAN WE BIND YOU . . ."**

"What in the name of Hell are you saying?" Lucifer interrupted in barely a whisper that left no doubt as to the intent behind his words. "You would utter those words here? Those words binding me?"

"My pardon Sire, I . . . I . . . I was just saying that each one of them is the terror to us that only a hand full of kings and prophets and priests were a problem of old before HE became ***flesh***." He spat the word "flesh" out like bloody sputum in his disgust. "Flesh is supposed to be **our** strength not His! We are the world, the flesh and the devil, not Him! Yet he takes possession of the Flesh, dwells in them, lives in them, even writes on the walls of their life as if he were a three year old! Or some gangster tagging a wall to claim territory. Each one of them filled with his Divine Presence. And they give us no handle to control them. No leader they blindly follow. This damn, 'You have the Holy Spirit, you have new hearts' business. What do they think? That each pathetic flesh suit is the Holy of Holies?"

"That's right." Abbadon spoke up for the first time. "We put them in jail, and the Holy Spirit fills every one of them and they start the First Church of Ephesus. And there, there, was . . . uh . . . one of them so insignificant I can't think of his name talking to a Eunuch. A Eunuch of all creatures. We had his balls safely in Hell. And God even promised that without them they could not get close to the Holy of Holies. But we should have known God doesn't keep his word. Suddenly Stephen, . . . that's his name, Stephen, a NOBODY, . . ."

"Philip sir," squeeked the same obnoxious minion. "It was Philip. . ."

"Like I said, **Stephen** is talking to him and he is baptized, OUR ENEMY LIVES - IN - HIM! The balless wonder is now the temple of the Holy Spirit and now he has converted half of Ethiopia. And we find out that Stephen's four daughters are Prophetesses!'

"That's Phillip sir." Mumbled one of the Legion.

"Do you want to return to the pigs? That can be arranged. But as I was saying, That's right! Worthless maidservants bearing the word of the Lord even the Spirit of the Lord, Prophesying as if they were men. Instead of bearing their children! Is nothing sacred? We had half of the humans locked out of any sort danger to us, their women! Bitches good for nothing but breeding, and suddenly they are our biggest threat! What are we to do? How do we train the men to master their wives like God told them to do back in the Garden? Is nothing sacred? Is nothing secure? What does it take to shut those howling dogs up?"

Ba'al had been thoughtfully silent since he announced his plan. Then he spoke up firmly now convinced he knew the way to Go.

"Yes, it will start like this." He stood up and with a flaming middle finger walked to the wall and began to write an outline.

1- We must organize them. We will do this by continuing to encourage them to select the best speakers, the best teachers the best prophets to speak to them. Nothing but the BEST for God's Kingdom. Its natural do you want

the best to pray, heal prophesy teach or do you want listen to old mugwart go on over there about how much water should be used in Baptism? And we will in the beginning encourage their holiness.

At the chorus of objection, "we tried that's" and "Holiness?" and "Their holiness is the problem!" he waved his hand for silence. "No," he said, "you have not tried this. This is not a short-term but a long-term plan for the millennia, for the ages. Holiness is only a problem if it is from the heart. You will find holiness the easiest thing to turn into a set of rules for the not so holy to follow. Once it sinks in, they can never extricate themselves from the burning quicksands of wealth, power, acclaim and authority that Holiness in the Rule of the Great One's inevitably brings them as it is expressed through unassailable rules for successful holiness and living. If Jesus told them not to put their great one's in charge, If Jesus gave them no specific do this or do that rules for holiness, then we know it is our only path to their destruction."

He turned back and with burning finger wrote,

2- When the most gifted plan something they will find that a number will not follow their plan. We will encourage them to take it personally and encourage and particularly encourage those who agree with them to create some sort of organization to be more effective. To distrust the unwashed congregation. They will more and more see willful division and disloyalty where there is only honest debate. They will inevitably see the need for discipline.

Beelzebub chimed in, "I see where you are going with this. We can get the leaders to shove the Love Feast where it belongs. It is so clumsy and long and distracting. We can boil it down to a ritual . . . you know some bread and wine and magic words, like what Paul told the Corinthians he said. We will get them to turn them into magic words that everyone must say to make the grace happen."

"Very Good!" Ba'al said. "Very Good. We will make that point 3." Writing in flames on the wall,

3- Create rituals that reduce the things that ignite devastating fellowship into magical song and dance that can be easily controlled by leaders we will be raising up . . . leaders who can sing and dance of course.

"That's it!" Prince Molech spoke up out of his depression. "We get the enemy out of their homes and out of their hearts the same way. We get them to build a big building to hold all of their activities in, their rituals, their teaching. We get the Holy Spirit out of the sanctuary of their homes and bars and businesses and put him back into a central temple where He can be properly controlled by their leaders. A Holy Place. Properly contained. Where they can keep him safe. What will we get them to call them, Priest, Father? Elder? Pastor? Shepherd? Overseer?"

"I like that." Ba'al said an evil smile lighting his face. "The name doesn't matter we will pick the names we find them using like, shepherd, elder, pastor, whatever, all that matters is that we define those names and in time they will believe that our definitions are actually in the Bible. The important thing is that as long as whatever they do is to think that their magic is controlling the Holy Spirit and through that control they use their special Status as Spirit Controllers to have authority over God's people and deny to them any control and authority over Spirit and God's Kingdom. . . ." He savored the next words like a strong liquor, and whispered "As long as **they** control the Spirit we control the **Spirit**."

"No!" Said Azazel. "we tried that, Simon the Christian Sorcer was slapped down. 'told to perish and his money with him.'"

"You understand nothing **Ass**'azel." Mocked Molech. "We can call it Simon the **Christian** Sorcerer's Strategy. Make it so only the leaders can **control** the Holy Spirit. The point is control, we will make them think it was the money! But that's not what they will call it. They would rather die than think they were controlling God, so we will encourage them to think that God is working through all the organizations we help them create in order to keep the work of the Church going whether or not God is involved."

"Yes Brilliant!" said Azazel ignoring the insult, "You are an angel of light . . . meaning no disrespect Sire" he said deferentially toward Lucifer. "They organize to be sure that wherever ministry is needed in their opinion they can provide it, it never occurring to them that it is the ministry of the people themselves that is tearing up Hell . . . No offense sire. The more they provide it the weaker and less able the people are and the greater they are and the greater the people's need for them is and pretty soon they are calling their actions and decisions divine actions inspired by the Holy Spirit whether or not he does anything. It is the brilliant feature of all organizing. If they don't they are in chaos, if they do their leaders become manageable indispensable little gods."

4- Building programs. People will need lots of money. We will be able in time to divert 80% of the money they **give** to church into maintaining their central buildings and like Molech said, get the Holy Spirit out of their houses, Tap Rooms and Businesses back in a central location. This will make church so much easier for everyone, plus with just a few rituals it will take less time . . . they will go for this. Salaries, hirelings. Did I mention budgets? Decency? Order? They will quite forget all Jesus himself needed for ministry is a bag and a thief and traitor to manage the funds.

Azazel spoke up again, "We need to channel their leaders. Getting them in charge of an organization of leaders isn't enough. We have to get the Holy Spirit out of each Christian . . . or at least make each Christian think that the real action of the Holy Spirit is in the leader. The logic of leadership organization and the pride of leading combined with the natural

laziness of people . . .

". . .it's so crazy it just might work."

Suddenly a flamboyant "5" appeared on the wall and fiery letters formed. Ba'al stepped back clearly annoyed at being upstaged this way. He was in charge here after all.

5- Build a stage at one end of the room or in the middle, and have only the leader speak and teach from that stage and make everyone silent except when told to speak or read or say something or sing . . . for holiness and respect or some such righteous drivel, we will tell them, but our purpose is to end this endless ministry of helping, loving, submitting, problem solving as if the Holy Spirit can handle everything with anyone however lowly esteemed. Above all get the kids out of there. A few years of one person speaking, one person doing all of the rituals, one person counseling and trying to solve everyone's problems and they will forget that there is any Holy Spirit anywhere else but in the building, in the Pulpit and in the Magician running the service. He will have all control of the congregation, the Kingdom, the power and the glory are His. Help them write books of rules to explain how it is that the Holy Spirit has returned in power to their leaders and His manifestation in the followers is to submit to them.

"AMEN!" they shouted in chorus. "Just like here!"

Ba'al started writing point 6 with a growl not waiting for Azazel to steal his show again. He was leader here, it was a point of order!

6- We will write books of order, rules, canons for how Church and worship should proceed. In a few generations we will take the brightest and best of them, put them in the center of attention, center of affection, center of crying need and the egos of all but a few will become . . . as wonderfully bloated as our own. (He scratched his crotch appreciatively.)

"Aren't you forgetting," Beelzebub interrupted sarcastically, "That the enemy really does love the little hairless slugs? You think he is going to let all of his leaders worship themselves?"

"No of course not!" Lucifer answered startling all of them. He began to laugh at the perfection of the plan.

His laugh was pure evil, in his eye a beam of dull genius gleamed like a beacon flooding the room in a lurid light making even the princes of the demons flesh crawl in filthy possibility of perversion. Look what he could do to light itself! I couldn't help but think what his light had become over the years since the dawn of time. How had it had boiled down to this putrid ooze.

"No, can't you see." Lucifer said. "Even those who survive perhaps the most brilliant seduction in history, Yes they will be brilliantly holy, saints

in every good and perfect sense. The plan needs them because they will be trapped with congregations who have long given up the idea that they can do anything; that any spark of the Holy Spirit is left them; certainly no gifts as Paul describes them. This will make #7 a stroke of genius, for even the holiest among them will doggedly defend this travesty we are foisting on them lest they branded him as disloyal, or Church haters. And with his own eye he inscribed,

7- They will convince themselves that the gifts of the Spirit involving God doing things directly to them have ceased. This will solidify the power of the leaders of the organization making their reign permanent. We will leave nowhere for the Voice of God to be heard except In their technical methods of interpreting the Bible. Even the pastors and priests who stay true to their humble purpose will have no support in congregations committed for a thousand different reasons to their own impotence and the elder's greatness. The more he humbles himself and pleads with them the more they will stop up their ears and praise him . . . for his exemplary humility if nothing else.

There was stunned silence. Deafening.

8- Budgets, full time salaries, Buildings . . . you have no idea how these simple devices will turn every dispute into a righteous battle to spend God's money, and use God's house the **right** way. And voila, the body being the Holy of Holies? Gone! Poof! Things Jesus never gave a tinker's damn about will be their obsession. It will make it damnably expensive to start new Churches and grow for instance. No more just starting a group in the house next door! Whatever they discover about God in their startup, their first love for Him, will be utterly lost by the time the building is paid for.

He looked straight at me, apparently noticing me for the first time. Pinning me in his gaze. He grew silent.

"They will obey Jesus." I squeaked in the ichor of his light as it washed over me. To me my voice barely made it out. But the effect it had on the hosts of horror was quite the opposite. They stepped back. Was that fear? I thought everyone saw my trembling, my squeak, but I sensed that they were even more shaken by something else.

Satan laughed again a laugh of pure perversion. "No one will believe you. They did not believe Jesus. If they are not even going to believe God," and there it was his very mention of my Lord was as foul as any inmate I have heard cursing an unfaithful girlfriend over the telephone from jail and all he did was name Him.

"If they are not even going to hear someone who returns from the dead, why should they hear you?" He went on. "And they did not listen to Jesus nor will they listen to you. You will be ignored at first. If you ever do speak in a way they can hear, they will shout you down with our legion of

different reasons to reinforce their need for power." He turned and smiled at them. "To keep their pastoral meatgrinder of church buildings, budgets salaries, and center stage spotlight, magical rituals done by only the right words and only the right holy men shaking their bags of bones, and holy silences to be forced to listen to whatever is going on rather than ministering themselves! Rituals where there were love feasts. All this going full blast withering the greatest spiritual giants who answer the call to the ministry and castrating every faithful attendant of their holiness show. For each successful pastor who is not ground up he will only live in the end to minister strength hope and future to my lie. BUT, With each pastoral ***failure*** they will turn to greater and greater control of the people quenching whatever is left of the Holy Spirit. This is Molech's unique administrative and bureaucratic specialty, consuming children."

"OH! And you think it will just destroy the elders who come into this ecclesiastical glory hole? Their families and children will be destroyed when they are put under the magnifying glass of a congregation's judgment. Oh yes their children are mine and the judgment of the Spiritless congregation will deliver them to me as will the very zeal of their patriarchal fathers to recreate a family a world, a master slave authority structure, a world Jesus himself said was over, finished, going back to the Beginning I think he said. But don't worry! By then we already will have convinced them that one man ruling another was the way from before sin claimed them so let them return they will see only power needing powerful men to wield it."

I was possessed by I do not know what. It was not fear any more I realized what he was saying. I stepped forward with an inexplicable joy and asked, "So you confirm that I am on the right track in what I have been finding in God's word?"

The Counsel of Hell's Princes stood up in anger. There's was a perfect plan. It was their last chance. If they could just organize the Church, if they could just take the young men and women with the most potential and put them in the grip of searing prominence and glory — that center stage of a pulpit so freely bestowed so jealously guarded. They could taste and see of the bark chipper they were on the verge of turning the Church into.

"Depart." Lucifer said. "We are finished with you here."

"You did not invite me, you shall not dismiss me. But you will listen to me. The day of the true power of submission, service, love and truth has already dawned 2,000 years ago when your feckless tomb failed to hold him. When he broke Roman law committing a capital offense to step out by rolling away the stone and breaking the Roman seal. That same power will transform not only the government of Marriage, the Church and all other governing bodies, business state so thoroughly that in time they will no longer be called governments at all. That word will be reserved for God's Holy Spirit at work in every heart writing God's law on the walls of that heart more surely than you wrote the destruction of the last 2,000

years of the wall of that Church on that wall over there."

That seemed to take them by surprise. I don't know if they did not know what era I had come from or if they were surprised that I thought they would be so successful. Just like I was surprised to realize that there really was hope for God's people. That the last 2,000 years were a sham and God really did have a plan to restore his reign. What was it?

"Yes you heard me, for at least 2,000 years and I don't know how many more you have the center stage, but your Church organizations and leaders and withering limelight will not be the last word, because the power you offer them is too ephemeral and fleeting. What God holds for each of his children will not be denied them, not by you, not by every pastor and board of elders who has ever thought that God's legacy to each of His children was in reality only a legacy for themselves to exercise in their behalf the power that belonged to the children themselves. God will not give them the last word with his bride or anywhere in creation. There will be no bureaucratic liaison between Christ and His Church, no Leah to creep into His marriage bed and supplant His bride, no Chaldean Officers regardless of their endowment to seduce them with church governing. Even now the children of the 60's the Millennials are being discipled by principles from God's word which have been released into society and they will hear, even now the Gospel is going from the Church to the Gentiles and those who were not my people will become my people."

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Of course this never happened. Or did it? You have to ask, could even the demons of Hell have devised a more perfect strategy to neuter the Church than the one that unfolded in history?

What would a Church — a congregation — look like that did not organize itself based on leaders who have the power to force the submission of their followers?

Now the first thing most people think when they hear this question, is to assume that we are proposing a Church with no leaders. And they immediately object that without leaders there would be no way to force followers to follow, then we would be in a state of anarchy or chaos. But this is a nonsensical conclusion. It is based on the presupposition that the only reason people follow Jesus Christ is because leaders force them to. The only reason heresy is refuted is because elite leaders force their followers to disagree with it. The only reason the flock is protected and taught is because leaders force them to listen to their teaching.

So let me make clear, we are not asking, "What would a church look like without leaders?" Answer: We believe God ordains leaders and they should be followed.

Rather, what we ask here is, ***"What would a church look like if leaders***

led by their example, by their persuasion, by their holiness and pastoral concern, their example as Peter tells them to do, and not the power to force others to follow as Peter and Jesus both told them **not** ***to do?"***

What would Jesus's Church look like? Is this possible?

The next 10 chapters will explore that Question. We will begin first where all books of church order of every sort begin, with the Lordship and Kingship of Jesus Christ. On that there is no disagreement in any book on the question of Church Government.

Appendix C

C. The Genesis 3:16 Pattern Has Worked

Gen 3:16 required a leader with the power to control the follower. It was a pattern designed for the immature, the criminal, the mentally and morally incompetent — in a word, the heart of stone which Adam and Eve and their Children became.

The role of God's law became external to them and was reduced to the curse of external control by the governments of men.

The Curse of human government was designed to preserve those living before Christ: Transformed the heart; Renewed the mind; Filled His people with His Spirit; Created in them a New Heart of Flesh.

The Cursed Government of Man-over-God's-Image, like an old cloak, served its purpose before a heart of flesh with God's Law written on it became the commonplace reality of all God's people from the least of them to the Greatest.

Since Christ, we are 2,000 years into the process of rolling that old cloak up and wrapping Hagar in it and casting the slave woman out with her son.

Salvation removes that old wineskin and the remnants of old, now sour, wine sloshing around in it and fills a new one with New Wine.

What you can say about the Church for the last 2,000 years is the basic structure-ideal of someone in charge with disciplinary power, some spiritual advisors and a submissive congregation has worked. Yes, for the first 1500 years it was explicitly a system in which those in charge, the fathers, the priests, actually thought they mediated grace and took control of the organized form of the religion of Jesus called, the Church.

In fact this is the model of leadership and organization in all human organizations, not just the Church, from the beginning of recorded history, with only one exception, the pre-fallen Garden of Eden.

The Reformation's most devastating attack on this priestly model was not merely its specific statement concerning it, but rather came from the implications of an exhaustively God centered definition of salvation leaving no rational room for an organization of leaders to mediate any grace or any salvation and by implication any punitive control in any way. The Westminster Confession of Faith after painstakingly defining salvation as being entirely of God, came to the doctrine of the Church in chapter 24 and 25. They made literally no mention of the organization of leaders the world is so familiar with. And how could there be? Any authoritative organization would be injected into the order of salvation to the extent it was granted power to control, ratify or confirm the people and require their submission. Though they made ad hoc mention of such elders and pastors elsewhere, granting control of things like sacraments, marriage, worship and the like, in its formal definition of the Church there is no mention. The Belgic confession was not so shy and declared that the organization of leaders (not just the congregation) had powers to control the congregation and made it a mark of faith to be in some sort of a formal controlling disciplinary relationship with them to verify their profession as valid. Even the Baptists, though they did not provide a priestly role for the organization of leaders in the first London Confession, did in the second London Confession put the organization of leaders which had so bitterly opposed them from the earliest memory firmly back in mediatorial control though denying mediation all the time. Whatever was said theoretically and theologically, they remain Priests in function if not in name and theology ***because if someone must answer to a particular body in order to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, that body becomes by definition a mediating body*.**

But it works. That cannot be denied, and it works because we all appreciate the order, rules and security provided.

Change will not come from within. Leaders are too comfortable controlling people from center stage, and people too comfortable being told what to do by men whom they imagine, if they are on center stage, must be giving them the things they need so they can go on with their lives.

Change will come when the people themselves change realizing who they are in Christ. The Reformation let the genie of the Created order reestablished in Christ, out of the bottle of tradition founded in the Curse of Genesis 3:16. They discipled the serfs to realize that salvation really is true. They, not just a leadership class, are new creatures, seated with Christ in the heavenlies with no mediation. They changed from Serfs to Citizens of Europe and the Americas. They will continue to change from Citizens of this or that nation to citizens of God's Kingdom ruled in each heart. As this discipling function grows in effect, the need for authoritarian fathers over wives, citizens and congregations will continue to diminish. Like a cloak for people migrating south, it will grow old and unnecessary.

This Handbook does not presuppose that pastors and elders are drunk with power, or that congregations are lazy. It presents the historic model of governing the Bride of Christ as having produced exactly what such a model can be expected to produce: a codependent two-tiered religion of elites and commoners appropriate to a hopelessly fallen world. Not appropriate for a redeemed world as the NT describes it. The reformation

democratized it, creating for the first time in history a representative government that actually worked because they discipled a people who could to a far greater degree than any imagined in history govern themselves. They discipled serfs into citizens. But as a mature pastor said in a sermon last Sunday, "To what extent do we believe that the Cross of Jesus Christ overcomes the curse of original sin?" Indeed! Do you believe?

Is representative government all Scripture envisaged? Or it's only a step toward the government God, not men, clearly outlined in His word?

Step back. Our organizing is designed to find the best people, the gifted people and give them education, career and power to run things. Yes, it works. Yes, it is not as bad as it could be. Yes, nothing else worked very well either. BUT . . . Is this not exactly what Jesus commanded His Bride **not** to do? Or does Jesus have to be a realist and realize that though He said leaders could only enforce their word with the power a servant has to enforce his word, we know by hard experience that what He said is clearly unworkable in light of original sin and its curse? Do we really believe that His word if taken at face value would lead to chaos and anarchy? Really? We know better? He could not have meant what he said?

So, whatever Jesus might say, to the contrary, the wisest leaders in the Church know from experience that there must be someone firmly in control with an organization backing him up and certifying him, and through him certifying the rest of the congregation . . . .

But . . . But . . . What if there is One in control who certifies and backs His leaders already? Jesus Christ who has sent His Spirit. Who made no provision for the flesh of organizations? This is what got me started: someone asked me what provision did Christ or the Apostles make for an organization of leaders to embody in themselves all the powers granted to the Church and to bear them representatively? My search for this explicit establishment has led me to the Upper Room.

What if His rule is not just stuff said in Chapter One of Documents like this (which is where this Handbook agrees with all Books of Order)? What would order look like if His rule through His word, by His Spirit attested by His people in fellowship together is the presupposition of everything that follows Chapter I. (The application of His rule in the earth is where this Handbook differs with those other books) The first half of Chapter I introduces you to the orthodox confession of the exclusive Kingship and exclusive Priesthood of Jesus the Christ, on which all agree from Catholic, and Orthodox, to Reformed, Baptists, and House churches. The 2nd half of Chapter I and the rest of the handbook, however, takes the terms of his Kingship and Priesthood to a radically different political outworking because it holds Jesus Christ as exclusive King and Priest who does not share his office or glory with another. In this handbook we bring the words of Christ into their own in the life of the believer and their self-government. If Christ is King, without mediation, then the organization of His Church must reject the mediatorial rule of priests and kings over His Bride, the Church, yet without rejecting the legitimate rule of those he has gifted, empowered and enforces by His Holy Spirit as they walk in his word and so lead.

What if there were a fellowship with Him in charge of each person in it, not just the leaders? A fellowship without mediator, without an

organization empowered to control it? If leaders were only set apart to lead them? Not control them? Lead them. What would a Book of Church Order look like if it assumed with Christ, Peter, John and Paul that a leader does not need the power to control in order to lead? Is a true priesthood of believers possible? Yes! It worked for Jesus & Co. through AD 70. It was a rhetorical ideal for the Reformers whose children today are rapidly returning to the authoritarian definitions of Cyprian telling us that apart from an oath of submission to an organization of uniquely empowered elders you cannot be considered a Christian capable of receiving communion. It is odd to realize that the most masterful exegetes in history could get the exact opposite meaning embodied in the words of I Corinthians 11. Or perhaps to make their error believable it requires master exegetes. Go read them and underline the role of the elder in the words of Paul concerning who examines who before partaking communion. If you still see it there visit an oculist. Those words give no support to the hoary traditions of men.

The presupposition of this Handbook is that in the words and example of Christ and His Apostles, leadership is just that: you lead. It involves a lot of talking, explaining, rebuking, teaching, exhorting and example setting. What it doesn't involve is administration of buildings, programs, career tracks, policy setting, policing, courts and punishments. If the people have been led properly, they will have been discipled to handle these things and everything else. If they can't? Then they are forced to follow one who is no leader as the actual words of Jesus, James and Paul define a leader. They follow one who confuses enforcement with rule and sprawling buildings and programs with ministry.

It is important to state at the outset, that the teaching of this Handbook is not:

Egalitarian. Egalitarianism is an ontological delusion that will destroy any theoretical or practical edifice built on it.

It is certainly not antinomian but rather assumes the abiding validity of God's word and law in Christ now written on the heart.

Nor does it advocate anarchy which is antinomian self-will.

If you understand anything you read here as opposing the need for leaders and leadership who are leading and ruling in the Household of God, then stop, go back, you have either misunderstood, or I need to rewrite something. Nothing here is opposed to order and decency or organization and organizers. Rather it places the authority, power and policing of God's people, and in time the world, where Scripture places it — not in a self-perpetuating organizations of reputed leaders[296] by whatever title they call themselves[297] and whatever description they give of their power and purpose.[298] Instead Scripture places the authority, power and policing of God's people in the transforming work of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word to each believer and the tireless

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[296] Galatians 2:9

[297] Matthew 13:8-12

[298] Luke 20:25-29 And every other time Jesus mentioned rule and authority. This is not a side point in the teaching of Jesus Christ, it is ***The Teaching*** on rule and authority, every time the question comes up, "who is the greatest?"

discipleship of those leaders to show how a mature Christian transforms the earth like an adult from the heart, not like a child in need of the perpetual heavy hand of a parent to force it into the right way. To true adults as to the mature Ephesians 1-4 Christian, both their parents and their Elders are their glory and joy, not their permanent disciplinarian and the mature son or daughter like the mature member of God's congregation is their crown, not their subject or child.

Appendix D

D. TO PLANT SUCH A FELLOWSHIP

This Section is written for those who want to try to build such a fellowship and have asked for my thoughts on it. After all the definition of "Utopian" is "Nice idea, but people are incapable of living that way." As such these are more ad hoc ideas than a coordinated game plan. Up until now my effort has been to create a book of order dealing with more abstract issues of government, discipline, order, worship and leadership if we change the central idea that gentile government since Genesis 3:16 is inescapable. If instead we conform to what Jesus said and did and the NT Church led by the Apostles said and did. ***These ideas are offered as a practical corrective to the idealistic, yet thoughtless, notion that when frustrated by authority all you have to do is get together with some frustrated friends and have a leaderless meeting.*** *Within weeks someone will be taking over . . . and should. By the time issues are sorted out, everyone's nose is out of joint, or worse, bleeding. This helps on a practical level to think through what leadership is and isn't in application.*

A. Find people of like mind and begin meeting, eating, praying, worshipping, fellowshipping, teaching, exhorting, and rebuking one another.

1. ***It is simple, eat together! You will find quickly that you are doing all the other things Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 12-14.***
2. What you need will be supplied by Him.

B. OK, you want something that takes you right from where you are without necessarily starting a new fellowship?

1. Start with your discontent with Church as you have experienced it and as you understand it to have been for the last 1000 years.
2. What is it missing? (List these positively not negatively.)
3. List all the things that elders should be doing, members of the congregation should be doing, what people running things should be doing.
4. Out of all of that, what do you think the heart of it all is that makes Church work at all? Take a shot at it, jot it down and then see how your other ideas fit into the grand theme of your discontent.
5. ***Now, start doing those things that you think people need to be doing that aren't being done in your current church.*** Do them with people in the church, or find friends and do it with/to them. Start cultivating people wherever you find yourself and talk to them and invite to do with them the things that you think your church is failing for not doing. There's the list ***you*** just wrote, find the things on it that are doable and do them.

C. The reason we don't try to start a church, however much what you read here makes you want one like this, is somewhere deep down inside we have this fear of the time and effort it takes to start an organization, a group, a meeting, to pour the hours, days weeks into other people's lives just to have them disappear. This is related to the other reason for reluctance, you like most people want a professional to do the heavy lifting so you can just show up and perhaps volunteer for a few things that are convenient. ***Welcome to why the Gentile Model works. It's not filled with power-grubbing sinners, its filled with folks like us.***

D. The Unity of the Holy Spirit is based on maturity which is personal, between each member of the fellowship and God who gave His law to you, not to any organization whether the Family, the institutional church, or to the State — "***I AM*** the LORD ***YOUR*** God, ***YOU*** shall . . . ."

1. The Unity of the Holy Spirit is not based on a human authority empowered to enforce people to unite. Not even the law of Moses was given to institutional leaders primarily but to each hearer, and to institutional leaders by extension with coercive power as to parents who hold their controlling authority until the child matures.
2. The Unity of the Church is the unity of the Created Order, it is based on "bearing with one another in love. Making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."[299]
3. Once personal unity is settled with God, unity in the Church, or really in any organization, is possible.
4. Though God's word can be applied to you by the force of third-party authoritarian government, from the beginning it was not so.
5. It was made necessary by our inability from the fall to self-govern. That brought on the Genesis 3:16 curse on government because if that self-government is not established then your choice is what it was before Christ: authoritarianism vs anarchy.[300]
6. Authoritarian government is the caretaker government that God instituted until the fullness of time and the Revelation and Salvation in Christ Jesus transforming His people. He is changing History as you listen or read.

E. YOU CAN'T DO IT! SO DON'T WAIT FOR A TIME THAT YOU THINK YOU CAN DO IT![301] The question is not what must you do? But what must God do in you? Who is He transforming you become? Get up out of Ur or Haran or wherever you are, and start walking the promise. God will supply.

1. God will continue to change you to walk in power in a completely

[299] Ephesians 4:2-3; Matthew 19:1-10.

[300] Hebrews 5:12.

[301] Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; John 14:12-20; 16:13; II Corinthians 2:9-16.

different way.[302]This change is not merely some sort of mystical sign that it is time, but rather a transformation of heart compelling you.

a. It is never the right time for the wrong heart.

b. It is never the wrong time for the right heart.

2. What follows is not a new set of rules that will change your heart, it is rather how your transforming heart will rule as you grow in grace and understanding.

a. the locus of change and authority must shift from the organization of rulers and rules which are necessary to temper the abuse of their power,

b. to the ethically, judicially mature heart of each member of the body of Christ making an authoritative powerbroker an unnecessary middleman as each does its part to build the body up in love.

3. Government theory since the Reformation has focused on how to provide checks and balances to those in power so they cannot abuse their power. This is a great improvement over aristocratic monarchy and a priesthood.

4. Jesus changes this entire picture. What He does to transform us removes our need for "power" or "authority," in the form of leadership organizations. He removes all status that can be undermined by rebels or abused by leaders to enforce a false unity. When He takes our worry away from fighting to control budgets and buildings then . . .

a. Our rules will address how the liberty to live in Christ can fall into bondage.[303] One obvious way of bondage is the temptation to multiply rules to better define liberty.

b. Our rules will be very different from any rules you have seen before.

5. When Elders and Members walk in the power of the Holy Spirit it is a two-way street. Speaking to both the leader and the follower Paul writes, *"…Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*[304]

a. **If you lead** you must have the confidence of the people so that you could to tell them to do anything and they would do it, and yet rather than telling them what to do, you teach them how to understand their

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[302] Acts 8.

[303] Galatians 5:1.

[304] Ephesians 4:1-6

situation and decide and do what is right themselves.

b. **If you follow**, you must have the confidence in your leaders that you would be willing to do whatever you are told, and yet rather than blind obedience, you work with them to think through the issues because the Leader sees only in part and needs what you see, even if you see less than they do.

c. **If you lead** you must be the sort of person who is not anxious to implement your vision for the Congregation until every member involved not only shares but is excited to communicate that vision because they have had a part in creating it. If it is of God, you can trust the word of God to speak through the creation process and trust those you have discipled to be mature in their doubts and discussions necessary for your mutual correction during that time.

d. **If you Follow** you must be the sort of person who waits until you really see and generate the vision sufficiently to evaluate it before simply trusting your leaders and doing what you are told . . . the leader needs to be surrounded by adults, not children, however willing the child. Maturity is the difference between an adult who thinks through an issue and a brilliant analytical fool who is just good at coming up with objections and one more pointless possible alternative action, "Since after all," they remind you, "Foreman's rule 0.E.5.d., calls for the need to be 'critically analytical.'" This person is the apotheosis of II Timothy 2:14-19 and 3:5. Have nothing to do with them for there is nothing humanly that can be done with them see John 6 for how Jesus treats this sort.

e. **The leader and the followers** must be the sort of people without strife, who have no interest in moving until everyone is moving from a common commitment, not from a common leader. This is not a formula for moving slowly. It is amazing how fast things can move when everyone is mature. "The leaders led in Israel and the People followed, Praise the Lord."

f. **The Leaders and the followers both** must become people who can argue intensely without being defensive.[305] They understand that there is no "position of authority" to undermine and no policy that will make or break the Church of Jesus Christ, no budget that if spent the wrong way would be wasted. We can relax and think openly from all perspectives safe in the Word of God and the communion unity and love of all the saints. God is either in this thing or He is not, and the earlier we find this out the better for all sides involved.

g. **Remember these are not rules to make you wise or self-controlled or protect you from the abuse of power. These are the things wise self-controlled leaders and followers do because they are wise and have no power to abuse.**

6. This is a very different sort of person whom we will all become.

[305] Jude 1:3

This isn't freestyle church. It is a gathering of people excited that they are characterized by their walk in "*the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*[306]

7. A set of rules or disciplines will not achieve this, nor will turning this list of considerations into a set of rules guarantee it. More is required. God is required.

F. Let me say again, GOD CAN DO IT! — You are the Mission of God, Embassy of God, Culture of God, Kingdom of God, Dominion of God, Friend of God, Child of God, as the Body of Christ, the Lover of God, the Bride of God. You are the Holy of Holie. You are the place where the Lord shall cause His Name to dwell. You have nothing to prove. [307] — Your heart is moved. You want to begin. So, begin with prayer.

1. So, there's a person or three who is open to becoming the Church of Jesus Christ.
2. Get together once a week bring food and eat together and pray and talk and worship together.
3. Find some place to go other than a restaurant so you can do things like sing or speak from the Scriptures or heart or walk around. In a park? The back yard? The living room? the basement? A parking lot?
4. Jesus met in all those places. (OK maybe not a parking lot.)

G. "Teach them to observe everything Christ has commanded." See if you caught that. "Teach Them to observe. . ." Ok try one more time: ". . . THEM to observe . . ." We think of teaching as imparting conclusions, doctrines, or rules or facts or information and answers the teacher has observed. But put the emphasis on **them** learning to apply the word of God to all of life as **they** observe it. Discipleship is ***not*** the responsibility of leaders to chew it, digest it and regurgitate it for them as if they are small birds surviving on the vomit of others. You are teaching ***them how they*** may observe. It is Christ in them that is the hope of their glory, ***not*** in you that is the hope of their glory. Discipleship is ***not*** teaching people how to listen to you and accept all the facts and wisdom you give them.

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[306] Ephesians 4:13-16.

[307] Matthew 5:13-16; II Corinthians 3:3; I Peter 2:4-6.

H. The following are Bible Studies to have together to begin this walk toward the sort of people who can dwell together in unity without being told what to do. So even if you have done them by yourself (and of course you will have because you've read this Handbook and you can't wait to experience God's word for yourself) do not rob the others of what you experienced by telling them what they must learn for themselves . . . If you are leading them, then the only lersson you can afford to teach is: . . . and get this clearly . . . **they *can* learn for themselves, They *don't* need you. You are only successful if you teach *them "to observe whatsoever I have commanded."* They don't need you or anyone else to observe it for them. You and they can put Hebrews 5:12 in the rear-view.**

1. Start with Timothy and Titus, where Paul is giving theoretical advice to budding elders. I will give you a lesson in how not to predigest and vomit onto your hearers. Do not eat my vomit either.

a. The point of the exercise is to cover all the material, not drill down. SO, Do a whole or half a book at a time. Skim it. Jot down the following things and when you are done (the time it takes to read the book and jot about 1 or 2 dozen sentences, what? It will take an hour?) you will have learned for yourself, not from me, who you are in the household of God.

b. As you read, jot first, the ways people disregard/oppose Timothy Titus or Paul. There's 5 or 6 per book. For instance, " They despised his youth" no more needs to be said move on. Constant argument. Move on, Constant argument again so jot it.

c. Next quick read through, jot the ways Paul says to deal with each problem faced.

d. Now take a minute to summarize all of the solutions: what sort of things solve the Elder's problems and help him lead the church? You have a list right there. Is anything on your list a power? An office? A status?

e. If you found what I found they are all either character traits of the mature Christian, or . . . you tell me?

f. Is there anything an elder should be to solve problems that is special to their being an elder, like you can't be patient with others, or have sound doctrine if you are not an official Christian Leader?

g. God has given you the same vision He gave Paul, to present each member of the fellowship mature, lacking no good thing.[308] These character traits you wrote down create:

i. Someone utterly confident that the Holy Spirit can handle any problem or conflict;

ii. Confident that God always has the last word on both sides of any

[308] Ephesians 5:27, "that He might present her to Himself a glorious church." Psalm 34:8-10. (There is eating again.)

dispute;

iii. Someone who finds it worth taking time to seek God in prayer with those who oppose him. The least of these has light to shine, prayers which God hears.

iv. Is the power of this vision preserved for those who hold office? Like Super-Timothy and Super-Titus, or is this bottom shelf cookies in the reach of all Christians. YOU all have this ministry of building up the body of Christ.

v. Wait a second, are these lists, the powers of an elder? Or are they the powers of each member of the congregation as they grow — anyone can hope, love, be kind, longsuffering, gentle, patient, take heed to themselves and their teaching, be reverent, self-controlled . . . these are not the power-prerogatives of ordained office. These are your power to change the earth. Real power.

vi. That old belief we all held in the "officer and his unique powers in the Church" is the illusion. It is the feather in Dumbo's grasp that he thinks makes him fly. How long are you going to put your faith in a feather, and not in the Word of God?

vii. The reality is found in the powers God gives each believer to resolve issues that even mature elders today cannot handle, because today we believe it is the powers of being ordained to the office of elder that gives you the special control of the keys of the kingdom of God.

viii. Today we are taught that the character traits of an elder are merely godly traits which adorn their power, the sugar that helps the medicine of their discipline and teaching go down.

ix. Paul makes clear that these "official organizational powers" are the illusion of power. Paul makes clear that their character (not the discipline they can mete out) is their actual power in the Holy Spirit to transform their congregation and overcome all opposition. He makes it clear by always appealing to their character in Christ, never to the power of their office. Does Paul attribute anything to an organization's official powers or to any human characteristic of the follower or of the leader? Hmmmmm, you could study the whole NT this way and answer that question. ***You*** can observe everything Christ commanded. ***You*** can disciple the nations.

x. And you discovered this by taking simple notes yourself. If you simply take my word for this, you will never personally know the power of God's word to transform you. But when you read and take note, you will quickly forget you heard anything from me or anyone else. You will be overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit speaking through the word and wonder how you could possibly have missed it, or why you spent so much time letting other people observe for you all that Christ has commanded.

2. Now, go to I & II Corinthians, while you eat and worship with your new friends and study where Paul is under the gun, doubted by an entire congregation, not even physically present with them so he

can't use any personal manipulation. All of the theoretical things he tells Timothy and Titus are the practical solutions to every one of the real-life problems in Corinth. Oh! you do that by quick read through jotting down all their problems then a second read jotting solutions, and compare his solutions to what he tells Timothy and Titus to do which you have already written down. Compare your lists, and see if Paul's power as an apostle is his Character as a Christian, not his Apostolic anointing or "office" even though he is anointed and appointed and holds the office of Apostle by appointment from Third heaven, does he use his abstract status "Office" to prove the truth of his word? Or, is his appeal ***always*** to the work of the Holy Spirit in His life and in their life; ***always*** depending only on God's ability to solve their problems; ***always*** through God confirming obedient character, not by finding official leaders to do the work of the ministry and solve their problems for them — not even putting himself forward on any other authority than what God communicates to them concerning him. But if you take my word for it you will always be that bird in the nest satisfying yourself with someone else's vomit.

a. Don't be satisfied with mine, don't be satisfied with your elder's vomit. There is a feast waiting for you!

b. You know how to study, figure out how and why Corinth could solve its problems without elders.

c. Hint, you won't find just cookies and milk down where anyone can reach, even the least esteemed among you is granted the power of the Holy Spirit in Love the steak dinner of building up the body of Christ, none of you blown about by every wind of doctrine.

3. Do it with **Galatians**, next. you will be surprised at how quickly you can learn to observe and disciple the nations.

a. Does Paul grant final authority to any person even if they hold an office? Did the fact that Peter was THE premier apostle mean that the Galatians should have submitted to him?

b. As you read through the first time, jot down every possible source of authority and power.

c. Is "Apostle" a source? On your list? Is reputation a source? Is Gender a Source? Who can require people to submit to them based on these things?

d. What makes a person someone with authority? Do the chapters following Paul's story about Peter teach about true authority and power? If so what?

e. What character traits are associated with authority and power? Is there anything to indicate that the power of the leader or the Christian lies in being able to force anyone to do anything? If so where? If not, why not?

f. What characteristics does human authority have in order to be

believed and followed?

4. Now Read Ephesians the same way.

a. The first time through jot down everything time love and unity is mentioned

b. ON your second read through, list everything love and unity accomplishes.

5. You should have now 20 pages describing the Ephesians 4:11 sort of Christian who is not blown about by the winds of everyone's opinions and yet is not dividing from everyone on every issue either.

6. You are becoming that sort of person, and people have gathered with you who are that sort of people searching the Scriptures for yourselves together, you are a non-authoritarian congregation. For you, self-government is not Utopian.

7. As a final introductory Bible Study, find out who does have final authority in the Church to judge?

a. ***Who does have final authority in the Church to judge? Answer:*** To find the powers of Christian self-Control go through all of the books you just studied, all the lists you have made, and ask this question of each point you jotted down — "What sort of person must I be to have the final say for myself, and yet unite with others (like my wife or husband) who will disagree on any number of points?"

b. Disunity is not an option, neither is unity with error. Only the mature can live in this tension, which is why only the mature are capable of the government outlined in this handbook and why only elders devoted to discipleship with no distractions can bring such Christians to birth.

c. "*Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things — things that belong to salvation."*[309]

I. **Your Fellowship Grows,** don't make it complicated.[310]

1. If something is important to you it comes out in your contacts with other people.

a. Whatever does come out in these contacts is what is really important to you.

b. If you want to know what is important to you it is whatever you talk about when you're not paying much attention.

c. You will communicate whatever your life is full of.

2. If you have found life and are alive you will communicate this to people.

a. This cannot be faked you either have peace or you don't.

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[309] Hebrews 6:9; Philippians 1:6.

[310] Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45; Proverbs 10:11; Psalm 14:1.

b. You either have an answer that is worth sharing or you don't.

c. You are either hanging out with a group of people that create something worth sharing or you don't

d. If your needs are not being met, you will share that too or you will be silent and not share anything or worse you will share the irrelevance of your soul.

e. This is true whether the doctrine of your church is immaculate, whether its practices are based on authoritarianism or self-control this analysis is true of you. *Whatever you share is what is worth sharing.*

3. As you talk with the people you meet, God will open doors for you to share the things you love — that is what social interaction is.

a. If you are in love;[311] and

b. experiencing Church as a community and family where you are one without being smothered by others or losing your identity;[312] and

c. If you are experiencing the reality of Ephesians 1 with people who make a difference in your life not to mention, II Corinthians 2 through chapter 4 . . .

d. If you are, you are going to talk about it and invite people to meet your friends. And you will look up these chapters and read them right now.

4. If this is not happening, you do what you did when you wanted to start the Church . . . you get on your face and talk to God about it, bringing up to him the people you meet.

a. It's God's problem, not yours. Keep bringing it to Him until He starts opening people up . . . or opening you up to people which is probably your real need.

b. This is the ministry of prayer which is one half of the Ministry of an Elder.

5. At some point the meeting room will get too small no matter how big the room is.

a. When that day comes divide everyone up. Approach this decision like all others. There will be people gravitating toward leadership and they will tend to divide with the group.

b. When all are in one accord . . . drive off.

c. It's OK. Nothing builds discipleship like discipling.

d. Nothing creates new leaders like new opportunities to lead.

e. There are people who are really super-gifted and can address thousands. It is a real hunger and burning in their bones to do so. Is their light hidden under a bushel of these tiny congregations always

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[311] Revelation 2:4.

[312] I Corinthians 12-13.

dividing about the time they experience what the gentile nations call success? Or will it kill a congregation and quench their light if they try to satisfy that craving? On the other hand, maybe social media could fill that gift and need without killing the gifted or the congregation with "success." One thing we do know. Pandering to the super gifted has been a disaster.

J. Evangelism. Tithing. Reaching out. feeding people[313] who need to eat. In time you will reach the world.

1. Tithe the way Moses told Israel to in Deuteronomy 12 and 14. It is tailor made for the New Covenant ministry, worship and outreach.

2. Forget everything you thought you knew about the debate. Go read Moses on the tithe. *"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide. . . . And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD Your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.*[314]

a. Tithing for Moses is a block party for the two week road trip it takes to get to the place where God's Name dwells, and the two weeks home, and a whole week partying while they are there.

b. No anemic passing of the offering plate here for the money to be handled by the elite.

c. It's what you have been doing with your new Christian friends, sitting around eating, talking, making merry before the Lord with all your might[315] as you worship, apply Scripture and pray for your healing so you can be part of this Congregation.

d. So, who is missing from the picture? At least once in a while go find them and bring them in to eat with you. The poor, the Levite, the stranger within your gate the widow and orphan. (Especially invite the Levite, You know him as the local pastor down the street. You know the one's still filling pulpits in other congregations..)

e. Who gets the tithe? The tithe goes to where the name of the Lord

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[313] John 21:17.

[314] Deuteronomy 14:21-29

[315] II Samuel 6:14, 21-23.

dwells.[316]

K. **The primary growth of the Church corporately is through division,** not through sending professionals to church plant.

1. Each part of the body is a church planter. Wherever someone goes they are the letter of commendation God is sending to whoever it is they are with. So, follow Paul's pattern.
2. You aren't starting a Church; you are just looking for people who want to be a part of a family.

a. Who respond to the Gospel meeting the deepest need in their life to be clean, known, understood, loved by God, cared about, engaged in meaningful work that is appreciated by others speaking into other people's lives.

b. Who respond to the other deepest need in their life — to be with real people who have found real answers but feel no need to bother others with them unless someone is open to talking.

c. Who are hungry, get them to start the same way you did and eat together. As they grow they will become people who do not need to run other people's lives with their homemade cookie cutters either, just like you don't.

d. Let them take the steps in Scripture as the Holy Spirit moves them to observe for themselves whatsoever Christ has commanded them. (I forgot to tell you; you don't need to start just one. Wherever you go there are hungry people willing to get together with you. Find them. Equip them to lead. Get out of the way.

3. Visit with them regularly and worship, eat and hang out with them during their meeting.

a. Don't spend too much time with them,

b. It is not your Church or church plant, it's God's He is spending full time with them and wants to use you from time to time.

c. You'll see.

4. When they fill up that place divide into two groups and so forth.
5. Do not keep leaders who rise to the top pressed down by solving all their problems for them.
6. Begin to meet with the leaders to teach them how discover for themselves that leadership is through service over time, not administrative decree or reading the right book.

a. It's not just a different set of rules or pecking order.

b. It is a different concept of maturity and leadership taken from the direct command of Christ and the NT definition of the New Creation

[316] I Corinthians 6:19; I Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:21; I Corinthians 12:27. See also, **Axe to the Root** podcasts by Bojidar Marinov. His exegesis is worth listening to. https://reconstructionistradio.com/tithing-responsibility-and-the-presence/

His people are.

L. **Schism, Error, Sin, Rebellion, Pride?** Of course you will deal with this. Let the congregation decide and each member decide what Scripture is saying, who and what is in and what is out if they can go with that decision. . . . its OK. God's word sorts it out in the next 300 years.

1. These things tear everything up. They tore Paul up.[317] They are impossible to deal with. Good thing it's not your problem.
2. There is only one Schism or true split, it is over the belief that God's written word is final. It is still nothing to get upset over when people deny this. Clarity is good.

a. As long as His word is final everything else is a dispute that He promises to sort out in time,

b. Your Job is to move only in the confidence that he can sort it out, you don't have to sort.

c. Of course, you have to think, argue, debate, search the scriptures, but the resolution is not your job. *"Study to show yourself approved a workman needing to be ashamed about nothing."*

d. God is the architect and the policeman and His word will never return to Him void until it has accomplished His purpose.

e. God promises He will police his people. So all those verses about peaceable, calm, loving, gentle, mean there is nothing requiring your anger to resolve. It won't add a cubit to your height.

3. Keep the discussion going friendly and intense, it does matter, but no one needs to win the discussion everyone needs to think either outcome is something God can work with . . . so can you.
4. But if the day comes when the differences are irreconcilable This is the glory of letting God run the show

a. If He is in charge why are you bitter? Angry? Saying things that twist your soul far more than speaking truth to the situation.

b. Why are you drinking poison and hoping that your enemy dies?

c. Why do you cut your own testicles off thinking that will sterilize your opponent?

d. God drank that poison for both of you.

e. If you did your job discipling the congregation they will not be swept away, nor will the weak among them need your authoritarian protection or authoritarian decree to know what to do — there will be no weak to protect.

f. God's got this even if you are the one who must walk out alone. If you are in the truth what better place is there to be? If you are not, what better way to wake you up?

[317] I Corinthians 4:9-13; II Corinthians 7:4-5; 10:12-11:43.

5. If it is a doctrinal issue, when all are in one accord as to where the lines are drawn, you have a church division just like when the congregation got too big.

a. You pray for each other and one group or the other gets sent off with each side praying that the other will see the light.

b. Trust God. He will establish, correct or erase that congregation that you believe got it wrong.

c. What? Did you think it was all those counsels and persecutions that kept the Church pure?

d. If it was, where did the Reformation come from? The Counter-Reformation? The denominations? Where did all them come from?

e. Who believed Athanasius was right when he stood against the world?

f. Why couldn't they run John Chrysostom out of town?

g. Right, God has his people and even as poorly as we have done it throughout the millennia His word has not failed to purify and grow His people not through councils but because God knows those who are his.

6. If it's a critical doctrinal error, Trinity, Incarnation, etc.? Same process, only a warning from each side to the other (I also recommend a self-maledictory oath.) but the same send off with prayer. God will trash the error in the dustbin of history. You don't need authoritarian egotists to really mix it up. He knows those who are His.

7. Is it sin? Let the sinner be identified and sent off to start his own church around his sin or whatever he wants to do, he's outside, its not your problem. the division is the same process just a much smaller send-off usually with no pretense to be starting a new Church on the sinners part.

8. Is the problem pride? a leader who thinks this is an authoritarian Church and he is the authority or is somehow competing with another elder? Or it is his job to root out sin?

a. In time the same process clarifies who is with the leader and wants to return to the authoritarian congregation and who gets what is going on and appreciates mature freedom. So? God bless them, send them off.[318]

b. And there you have it; a new congregation is formed.

c. It is amazing when you keep the budget down to a bag and donations from people you can't control, and your ego committed to building up your brothers and sisters, the whole world turns into a footstool for the King.[319]

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[318] Genesis 31:49.

[319] Psalm 110:1,3. The Footstooling of the world begins with self-government.

9. Oh! did the congregation stop growing during this process . . . maybe you need to let God do the heavy lifting and know whether you walk out or they do its OK, you will keep the process of reaching out going as if nothing else is going on. And it isn't. Everywhere you go you are meeting people who will be starting congregations or joining yours.

a. If your controversy or church politics empties you so you are no longer full enough to slosh over or pour out on others then you need to go back to square one above — Prayer — it's half the ministry of the saints.

b. This resolving or failure to resolve issues has nothing to do with the various things which cause God's people to grow. If it does it must be addressed regardless of which side of the fence you are on.

M. Let it not be said of you, *"The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say, You will keep on hearing but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing but will not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.' Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Millennials; they will also listen."*